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DECOMMODIFYING VOLUNTEER TOURISM? INSIGHTS FROM NORDIC  
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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### **Abstract**

Volunteer tourism is a dichotomy of altruistic charitable work and hedonistic leisure play. The idea of traveling for volunteering is to assist others while experiencing unfamiliar conditions, being able to manage those and returning enriched. Over the past decades, many actors have been taken advantage of the substantial growth in demand for volunteer tourism turning volunteering into millions generating business. As a contrast to the commodification of volunteer missions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have sought to provide more ethical and philanthropic ways of volunteering.

Within the field of tourism studies, volunteer tourism is situated along the lines of social, responsible, sustainable, moral, alternative, and eco-tourism. Volunteer tourism has been predominantly researched either from volunteer or host community perspectives, and little research examined NGOs in facilitating volunteer tourism projects. Theoretically, this study draws upon the critical stream of literature, which highlights negative impacts of tourism commodification. Critics emphasize that instead of focusing on the needs of host communities, the provision of packaged, exotic, cultural consumption experiences in developing countries has become the main objective of the volunteer tourism market.

This study aims at understanding how Nordic NGOs decommodify volunteer tourism through their everyday practices. The empirical material consists of seven semi-structured in-depth interviews with NGOs' representatives which were gathered in spring 2016 and analyzed through qualitative content analysis. Findings suggest that those Nordic NGOs which are more in line with community needs tend to decommodify volunteer tourism projects by selecting only skilled volunteers, assigning them to tasks according to expertise, in addition providing cultural education. Decommodifying volunteer tourism means embracing ethical engagement with local cultures and environments as well as fostering local economies. Nonetheless, those Nordic NGOs which are more oriented towards the neoliberal market, prioritize personal development of volunteers over community needs.

In general, results indicate that decommodification of volunteer tourism exists as a multifaceted phenomenon and occurs on a spectrum of simultaneous practices. This study provides insights to NGOs and other actors that are interested in enhancing more responsible forms of volunteer tourism by underlying the importance of community, instead of a commodity, centered approach.

Keywords: volunteering, volunteer tourism, commodification, decommodification, NGOs

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Who needs a formal education to teach in Africa? Not me! All I need is some chalk and a dose of optimism. It's so sad that they don't have enough trained teachers here. I'm not trained either, but I'm from the West, so it all works out. Good morning, class!*

*#barbiesaviortheducator #wildwildwest #theyteachmorethaniteachthem  
#whichmakessense cuz icant teach" #PhDin delusional thought processes  
#degrees please #qualified is not a feeling #good still QUALIFIED the called  
#gettingschooled and overruled (Barbie Saviour, 2016)*

The above-mentioned quote is taken from the Instagram account of Barbie Savior, who volunteers in international humanitarian aid initiatives on the African continent. Barbie Savior regularly posts in social media about her volunteering journey of selflessly helping others by teaching without pedagogical background, engaging in orphanage centers, rescuing the wild animals, improving medical system, and establishing her own NGO. In short, she is saving the world through her overarching enthusiasm and images reflecting self as of looking good in opposition to the local black people. The sarcastic Instagram account approaches the white savior complex and how westerns believe in salvaging people of color (Edell, 2016). This white savior complex is an implicit discussion of development projects and volunteer tourism.

Today's tourism has an extremely large market and high demand for various types of trips, holidays, and activities. Volunteer tourism diversifies from other business sectors by its complexity and uniqueness connecting aid work, desire assisting in communities and at the same time engaging with local culture, nature, and people. As a new tourism niche volunteer tourism market is facilitated by numerous volunteering projects and destinations, various target markets, and several types of players involved which increase intense competitiveness in the area (see Callanan & Thomas, 2005, p. 183).

The interest of volunteer tourism has grown so rapidly in the past few decades that an online search engine Google with "international volunteering" delivers 55 million hits (Google, 2016). In order to elaborate the scope and scale of this niche, the number of hits in 2009 was smaller as there were only 6 million results (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2011). Moreover, not-for-

profit organization AIESEC online database offers 44287 volunteering opportunities across 126 countries (AIESEC, 2016). Furthermore, the individual volunteer organization Earthwatch between 1971 and 2008 has sent up to 90.000 volunteers in 1400 projects across 120 countries and contributing 67 \$US million (Earthwatch Institute, 2016). Obviously, volunteer tourism is the fastest growing travel trend in today's tourism industry with more than 1.6 million volunteers spending over 2 \$US billion a year (see Smith, 2014). Those numbers clearly indicate the globally growing popularity of volunteer tourism and its commodification. The sector of volunteer tourism is rapidly expanding in many countries in both developing and developed world (see Young, 2008).

The increasing interest in volunteer tourism mainly grown between Western countries. The young generation is driven by the idea of international volunteering and is keen to enjoy a hedonistic lifestyle for a brief period of time (see Laythorpe, 2010). Nowadays, the spectrum of trips offered and types of travelers is remarkably wide and diverse. According to World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2008), youth tourism is characterized by four main criteria. First, by age group, which varies between 15 and 26 years with other limits; also by niche market which is related to the style of traveling or products of tourism e.g. independent traveling, backpacking or work exchange. Lastly, by the purpose of the study; international exchange, peace, and understanding. According to WTO (2008), youth are not identifying themselves as "tourists" instead they used to be labeled as a combination of backpacker/traveler/tourist, volunteer or student.

Two anonymous "twenty-something white women" behind the Barbie Savior's Instagram account (Burson, 2016) are not the only ones giving their critique and attention to volunteer tourism. Nowadays, volunteer tourism as a social phenomenon raises a lot of discussions and criticism, not only in popular media but also among academics, practitioners, and volunteers (Vrasti, 2013; Butcher, 2012; Guttentag, 2009). In this vein, the study at hand contributes to emerging discourse of volunteer tourism and particularly concentrates on the role of NGOs in volunteer tourism marketplace from both commodification and decommodification paradigms.

## 1.1 Previous research

Volunteer tourism itself is a new phenomenon which dramatic growth in the market, has brought many discussions among academics, and the research field has increasingly emerged. The notion of volunteer tourism is researched from different theoretical perspectives focusing on volunteers and their trips (Brown, 2005; Callanan & Thomas, 2005; McGehee & Santos, 2005; Holmes & Smith, 2009), their motivation (Wearing, 2001; Campbell & Smith, 2006; Clifton & Benson, 2006), personal growth (Koleth, 2014; Boluk & Ranjbar, 2014), and how they are affected by the volunteer activities (McGehee, 2002; McGehee & Santos, 2005). Several researchers have examined also community development projects, benefits and impacts (Galley & Clifton, 2004; Brown, 2005; Simpson, 2005; Coghlan, 2008; McGehee & Andereck, 2009; Guttentag, 2012), as well as receiving or sending organizations (Wearing, 2005; Lamoureux, 2009; Coren & Gray, 2012). Nonetheless, the attention to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as key stakeholders between volunteers and host communities were carried on in Wearing's (2001) researches.

Furthermore, volunteering abroad brings up many discussions about the benefits to volunteer or community and opens the dialogue whether volunteers are “saving the poor” or changing themselves (Wearing, 2001; Brown & Morrison, 2003). Volunteer tourism is a cornerstone of today's and tomorrow's youth traveling and especially between Western countries. Young people after the school, university or during the summer holidays are seeking for an extraordinary experience by hope to help others. This unusual experience was converted into the non-formal education of intercultural learning and personal growth that was broadly discussed connecting neoliberalism, colonialism and ethical consumerism (Vrasti, 2013; Caton, 2014). Even though, many volunteers are going to devote their time and are ready to help for communities in need. Yet, this well-intentioned traveling is at its peak of critics about unsustainable (Guttentag, 2012), unethical (Jamal & Manzel, 2009; Butcher, 2012) and immoral (Boluk & Ranjbar, 2014) issues in volunteer tourism. The discussion also highlights main concerns about organizations' disorganized management, dissatisfied volunteers, and harm created for communities (Guttentag, 2012; Butcher, 2012; Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013).

Volunteer tourists who desire to achieve meaningful involvements rather than a pleasure-filled, self-indulgent holidays (Scheyvens, 2002) fit under the form of alternative travelers

(Wearing, 2001) who are interested in more flexible, authentic, natural tourism experiences. However, many times such experience including new places, cultures, traditions, people are offered in the marketplace and turned into a commodity which is emphasized as some kind of “combination of fantasy and experience, a jointly discursive and embodied “product” that draws its raw material on the geographical spaces, the cultural dynamics, and even the physical bodies of other human beings” (Caton, 2014, p. 26). The attention was drawn on volunteer tourism and its commodification due to fully prepared packages for individuals who are ready paying to assist with development or conservation work in Third World countries (Wearing, 2001; Lyons & Wearing, 2008). “Help”, poverty, locals are all included in the commodification of volunteer tourism experience which combines the moral achievements of “making the difference”, self-development and hedonistic enjoyment.

In contradiction with commodification, decommodification has been taken up by tourism literature as a counter-concept in order to bring the change in volunteer tourism by the best practices of NGOs which have its potential to raise new and positive attitudes, values and actions in tourists and host communities (Wearing et al., 2005). The decommodified structure of volunteer tourism suggests to understand and appreciate local needs, ethically engage in their environment and operate outside the neoliberal framework, meaning that volunteers are recruited and assigned to the tasks according to their skills and competencies.

The criticism in social media and academia capture the attention to study decommodified volunteer tourism. It is important, however, to understand if philanthropic NGOs are those initiators which have the possibility to change the meaning of volunteer tourism for all parts involved: volunteers, societies, and local communities. The main objective of the study is to contribute to building more decommodified approach to volunteer tourism by connecting the theoretical implications into the practices of volunteer tourism organizations. This study suggests that decommodified structure of volunteer tourism could minimize negative impacts by the ethical and more responsible practices of volunteers hosting and sending organizations. Specifically, the study aims to represent the practices of volunteering organizations and how it is approached through alternative decommodified volunteer tourism structures.

The researcher of this study aims to be in a position between two dichotomies of volunteering and tourism, acknowledging within possible positive and negative aspects of volunteer tourism



and recognizing decommodification as a model for future volunteer tourism development. Notably, for the purpose of this study, any participant who is traveling in order to volunteer in another country is perceived as “volunteer tourist” and any NGO which is organizing such volunteer projects or is responsible for the sending volunteers is considered as “volunteer tourism sending organization” (Wearing & McGehee, 2013).

## **1.2 Purpose of the study**

Due to a multiplicity of involved providers in volunteer tourism, plus the numerous activities and projects volunteers are engaging in, it is very difficult to gain a comprehensive overview of the volunteer tourism market. Especially when volunteer tourism in last few decades has grown extremely, offering a broad spectrum of commercialized experiences in developing countries. As a consequence, the attempts to minimize negative impacts brought by the commodification of volunteer tourism has been taken by philanthropic aims of non-profit organizations. Particularly, Wearing and McGehee (2013) proposed decommodification as an alternative paradigm which contributes to the new initiatives in facilitating volunteer tourism while concentrating on communities and environment rather than providing experiences of youth development. Nevertheless, decommodification of volunteer tourism suggests such alternatives as to reduce mass tourism (McGehee & Andereck, 2009), increase community well-being (Wearing & McGehee, 2013), and promote ethical engagement between hosts and guests (Wearing & Ponting, 2009). With this intention, study at hand contributes to the emerging criticism of volunteer tourism and joins a discussion about volunteer tourism and how this particular phenomenon is seen in decommodified research paradigm.

In fact, it would be more precise if the future of volunteer tourism is examined from different perspectives to tackle the growing popularity and the importance of the phenomenon (Wearing & McGehee, 2013). While increased attention has been focusing either on the volunteer side or the communities and host organizations, little research has contributed to this field researching about the NGOs from the Western world and more specifically from the Nordic. Besides that, Holmes and Smith (2009, p. 33) indicate that there is a lack of research particularly in respect to small organizations. Although, other scholars (Wearing et al., 2005) suggest that NGOs are seen as an example of the best practice in decommodifying tourism, and as a practical application of the success.

Even though decommodified method was taken by Gray and Campbell (2007), who researched on volunteer ecotourism in Costa Rica, there is a little research from the viewpoint of Nordic NGOs. The focus of this study is to concentrate on analyzing the practices of NGOs that are established in the Nordic countries including Finland, Sweden, and Norway. However, few types of research have been conducted in Finnish universities, where the main focus was on the ethics of volunteer tourism between different actors: volunteers, host organizations and communities (Viljanen, 2009); also volunteer tourism was researched through sustainable tourism perspective of Finnish volunteer tourists (Korkeakoski, 2012).

Since it has been observed that there is a lack of studies concentrating on practices of NGOs that promote international volunteering for young people, this study aims to understand how do Nordic NGOs decommodify volunteer tourism through their everyday practices? To work towards that aim, the following research questions were formulated. Primarily, (1) how Nordic NGOs are positioning themselves in volunteer tourism market? And then, (2) what are the concrete actions of Nordic NGOs taken to decommodify volunteer tourism? Lastly, (3) what difficulties Nordic NGOs encounter in decommodifying volunteer tourism?

Through qualitative research methods, the study focuses on investigating practices of Nordic NGOs which promote international volunteering by sending young people abroad. The empirical material consists of semi-structured in-depth interviews with seven NGOs' representatives, gathered in spring 2016. Interviews were conducted via Skype program, tape-recorded and later transcribed. The interpretative method of content analysis was chosen to analyze the empirical material based on the inductive use of theory.

### **1.3 Structure of the study**

This study contains four main parts representing theoretical framework, methodology, the analysis, and conclusions. The theoretical framework starts with the *second* chapter which elaborates the debate on volunteering within tourism and describes how these two different concepts construct the phenomenon of volunteer tourism. Further, the part of volunteer tourism highlights four mainstreams of the topic such as categorization of volunteer tourism, a motivation of the volunteers, benefits from volunteer tourism also the contemporary criticism in academia and social media. Additional, the concepts of commodification and

decommodification as an ethical concern in tourism are explained in the following parts. The last subchapter about the role of NGOs in volunteer tourism completes the theoretical framework.

The *third* chapter continues representing the methods and research design of this study. This chapter aims to explain how qualitative research methods were used to gather semi-structured in-depth interviews and later how the empirical material was examined using content analysis within the interpretative paradigm. The *fourth* chapter draws the analysis and discussion of the study. It indicates the main study findings and demonstrates how Nordic NGOs are positioning themselves in relation to the commercial volunteer tourism organizations. It also introduces which Nordic NGOs practices are decommodifying volunteer tourism, and, lastly, what are the main obstacles that Nordic NGOs encounter in decommodifying volunteer tourism. The final *fifth* chapter presents the key elements from the findings, limitations and of how this research could be applied in the future studies.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Defining volunteering within tourism**

To begin with, volunteering is a very wide-ranging and complex notion that involves not only volunteering participants, organizations but also communities and societies. Mostly, literature emphasizes the sector that has an impact either on the participant or the host communities (Wearing, 2001; Brown & Marrison, 2003; McGehee & Santos, 2005). Important to pay attention to Rochester et al. (2010) who analyze volunteering from three different perspectives: as a dominant paradigm, as a civil society paradigm, and as serious leisure. Shortly, a dominant paradigm involves volunteers in associations, peace movements, welfare activities, volunteering for health-related associations, volunteer work associations concerned with aiding the development of emerging countries or with human rights. Further, the civil society paradigm suggested by Lyons et al. (1998), is constructed as a non-profit pattern which includes Europe and developing countries of South. Often this kind of voluntary action is characterized as activism rather than unpaid help (Rochester et al., 2010, p. 13). A third view that is emphasized by Rochester et al. (2010) and also described by Stebbins (2004) suggests to understand volunteering as a serious leisure, it is identified as a holiday activity, ideas to have fun or hobby.

It is recognized that volunteering indicates unpaid work and activism; a combination of activism and serious leisure; a combination of serious leisure and unpaid work; or a combination of all three elements (Rochester et al., 2010, p. 13). The definition provided by Stebbins (2004) is built upon four mainstreams as such choice, remuneration, structure and intended beneficiaries. Scholar describes volunteering as unforced “help offered either formally or informally with no or, at most, token pay done for the benefits of both other people and the volunteer” (see Stebbins, 2004, p. 5). People are often volunteering in their environment, but not everybody understands its forms. For example, formal volunteering involves the volunteer in collaboration with organization tasks and activities while informal volunteering describes the help provided to relatives, friends, or neighbors (see Stebbins, 2004).

In return, Kearney (2001, p. 6) constructs volunteering as following: “it is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, and can take many forms”. In addition to that, volunteering is chosen freely by the individual without any concern about the financial benefits (see Kearney, 2001). Besides, volunteering is distinguished by long-term or short-term periods. Differentiation depends on the organization, tasks and responsibilities, and the project period. Long-term volunteers are perceived as those who has a strong sense of commitment to the organization and the work of its volunteers (Rochester et al., 2010). For all that, such volunteers starting to create their own responsibilities and tasks within the organization. While short-term volunteers are seen as a new phenomenon. It describes those volunteers who are seeking to volunteer for the short duration and the work they are doing is well-defined and organized. Macduff (2005, p. 50) divides more precisely short-term volunteering into three different forms. First, the temporary-episodic volunteer, who spends at most four hours volunteering at the short event. Secondly, the intern volunteer, who is involved in regular basis for the particular period, but less than six months (e.g. student work placements). And last, the occasional episodic volunteer who volunteers for a short period event, but are coming to volunteer every year for the same tasks.

Recently, other volunteering categories have been introduced. Such as transnational volunteering which defines those who are moving to volunteer from one country to another, while virtual volunteering - attracts those people who are operating virtually, and interest people with long medical conditions, or those who have problems with mobility. Another category describes disaster volunteering which involves volunteers who are ready and prepared to respond quickly to the natural catastrophes like earthquake or hurricanes (Rochester et al., 2010, p. 34). In this regard, Holmes and Smith (2009, p. 11) suggest another trends of volunteering like family and intergenerational volunteering; corporate, workplace, employee or employer-supported volunteering and volunteer tourism.

One of the central questions that volunteering concerns is whether or not volunteering “make a difference” to the societies visited (Butcher, 2008). Generally, volunteering impacts are seen either on volunteer, organization, community or service users side. On the whole, Ockenden (2007) categorizes the effects of volunteering in five key policy areas:

*1. Development.* Volunteering has been recognized to contribute to the economic and sustainable local development.

2. *Safer and stronger communities.* It is more likely that those who engage in volunteering have a positive view of their neighborhood and have a higher level of trust.

3. *Social inclusion.* Volunteering can help to encounter feelings of social isolation and enable community integration.

4. *The quality of life.* Volunteering may trigger enjoyment and impact positively to mental and physical health.

5. *Lifelong learning.* Volunteering may contribute to skill development and sustainable learning.

In general, the benefits that volunteering brings differ from the volunteer and the voluntary activities. For example, if the volunteers have skills or education to teach English or have other competencies it is more efficient for the project rather than an unskilled participant. Differently, many volunteers-sending organizations are not requiring to have any specific skills for the volunteers, so the question about the impacts to host communities is debated (Simpson, 2005). However, the biggest attention usually is paid to the volunteer and not always to the society that s/he is volunteering. Other suggest that volunteering impact is divided into five areas of capital: physical, human, economic, social, and cultural (Rochester et al., 2010, p. 165).

Koleth (2014) opens up another facet of volunteering. Namely, volunteering is the current socio-economic role of society which corporates business that encourages youth to invest into themselves through volunteering: “development tourists are given to believe that they are investing in a highly competitive self” (see Koleth, 2014, p. 125). Callanan and Thomas (2005, p. 183) highlight that volunteer has a clear focus on altruism and self-development which is gained by working on voluntary projects. It is noted, that volunteering combines elements of altruism with perceived benefits to the individual, i.e. self-interest (see Laythorpe, 2010, p. 145). Eventually, volunteering is viewed to be beneficial for the volunteer itself and his/her personal growth. Additionally, the dichotomy of altruism and personal development, for the sake of self is embedded in the socio-economic system, which explicitly refers to neoliberalism, competition and the need of westerns to “spice up” their CVs in the job market (Vrasti, 2013).

Growing tourism industry changes the meaning of volunteering. Today many people are more concerned with experience volunteering outside their countries rather than to volunteer in their local organizations. In order to understand volunteer tourism, it is important to discuss how tourism contributes to this phenomenon. Tourism is sociocultural, institutionalized, economically significant phenomenon, that consists of ecological and socio-cultural impacts, movements of people across borders, and imaginaries. Moreover, tourism can be elaborated from historical, geographical, sociological, and economic perspectives. This study draws upon Urry's and Larsen's (2011, p. 4) definition of tourism that "tourist relationship arises from a movement of people to, and their stay in, various destinations /.../ it involves some movement through the space, that is, the journeys and periods of stay in a new place or places". Pearce and Butler (1993, p. 11) suggest that tourism involves traveling and "a temporary visit to a place away from home and that this change of place is voluntary". However, UNWTO defining tourism in very similar concept as "activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes" (WTO, 2008, p. 1). In this manner, going to volunteer in another country reflects the concept of volunteer tourism, where volunteers are traveling freely to discover new places, new cultures, new people by doing voluntary activities.

Under the umbrella of responsible and alternative tourism Vrasti (2013, p. 72) defines volunteer tourism as a mix of "travel and work, hedonism and purpose, charity and self-growth; volunteer tourism seems well-poised to solve the pervasive problem of modern alienation and loss". However, tourism touches many social problems and sometimes even does not stand outside of the global poverty but also contributes to it (Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013, p. 30). For example, many volunteer-sending organizations are established in the West or North countries, so the money paid for trips at first place are spent to sustain business rather than communities. Besides that, volunteers are also tending to take jobs from the locals, so in that way, the poverty level is increasing (Guttenberg, 2009).

Volunteers are seeking commonly different experience in other countries. Particularly, a balance between volunteer work and touristic involvement is important because altruistic motives show how the volunteer is devoting the time and efforts for the real help but not for traveling. In many cases, people are traveling to volunteer only because they desire to go to another country and to know a different culture. It is important to establish the correct balance

between voluntary experience and tourism experience that volunteers are gaining. Swan (2012, p. 240) studied volunteer tourism in Ghana and found that international volunteers are neither tourists nor development workers. As a tourist, they are different because “their experience will be authentic and involve deep immersion into another culture” and they are not able to make a difference “without any professional qualifications, the experience of or employment within the field of international development” (see Swan, 2012, p. 254). On the leisure component of volunteer tourism, volunteers usually are traveling during the weekends or after the voluntary period ends. Drawing on fieldwork about the backpacker volunteers in Tanzania, Laythorpe (2010, p. 149) shows that the idea of volunteer tourism and the dualism of work and leisure has led to a consideration of a “holiday within a holiday”, where backpacking activities have taken place during the volunteer placement.

However, MacCannell and Lippard (1999) raise debate about the regular tourists and their quest for authenticity. Volunteering as a new form of tourism seeks to change actual poverty of the places, where tourists are seen as contemporary pilgrims, who are looking for authenticity in others “time” and others “place”. Scholars point out, that visitors are particularly fascinated by the lives of “others” which is hard to discover in their own places.

Overall, volunteering is understood as an action freely taken by the individual to assist and commit to particular tasks. It is also seen in many different ways and forms that nowadays are very complex and extensive. One of the most recent forms of volunteering also involves tourism, which contributes to this particular category of volunteering in various ways. However, both volunteering and tourism together are fulfilling each other and creating the whole complex phenomenon of volunteer tourism which is broadly emphasized in the following part.

## **2.2 Volunteer tourism**

Volunteer tourism is an increasingly growing trend not only in travel industry among the youth, but also constantly emerging discourse among the academics (ATLAS, 2008, as cited in Smith, 2014, p. 34). Vrasti (2013, p. 1) finds the origins of volunteer tourism in 1958 when the organization of British Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) was founded and later US Peace Corps in 1961. During the first trips, people were engaging in the development work and aid



projects. Nowadays, volunteer tourism involves other forms of education and production. Such as study abroad initiatives, continuing education, mandatory service programs, and internships (Vrasti, 2013). Butcher (2003) argues that since the 1990s the changes in tourism brought the concept of “self-conscious ethical or moral tourism” known as volunteer tourism which replaced “hedonistic pleasure” by “guilt and obligation”. Nonetheless, Callanan and Thomas (2005, p. 183) root “volunteer tourism rush” in the late 1990s and early 2000s influenced by “an ever increasing guilt conscious society”. Here, guilt culture brings the feelings of fault in the Western world where volunteers are ready to donate their money, time, and desire to help communities that are less fortunate.

Volunteer tourism encompasses notions of sustainability, empowerment, local development, community participation, environmental conservation, and cross-cultural exchange (see Guttentag, 2012, p. 152). Wearing (2001, p. 1), who has been mainly contributing to volunteer tourism studies, refers volunteer tourists to those who “for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve the aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment”. In addition to this, volunteer tourism is also known as voluntourism. Indeed, the term is not that often used by academics. Likewise, voluntourism is defined as “the conscious, seamlessly integrated combination of voluntary service to a destination at the best, traditional elements of travel – art, culture, geography, history and recreation – in the destination” (Clemmons, 2011).

According to Rochester et al. (2010, p. 111), international volunteering is changing its name to volunteer tourism because it is progressively more promoted as “a cheap way to travel and experience another culture, as a form of personal and career development”. As a research object volunteer tourism is mostly examined either from tourism side or the volunteering side, but it is difficult to distinguish these two concepts together (see Stebbins, 2004, p. 2). Possibly, because volunteering is more about the altruistic motives and tourism, which defines hedonistic purposes and pleasure, nowadays is associated with masses, holidaying, beach, sea, and sand (Butcher, 2003). Interestingly, both definitions are combining tourism and volunteering, altruism and hedonism, and partly fulfilling each another.

Further, Wearing and McGehee (2013a, p. 31) situate volunteer tourism together with alternative tourism, because those organizations that provide the international support, sponsorship, implementation of the research projects and community development have a different “operating philosophies and processes that use resources which may not, otherwise, be available for mass tourism- such as fundraising”. In many cases, volunteering is not the primary activity neither for organizations nor young people. Hindman (2014, p. 49) states that international volunteering involves cultural and historical experiences that are created by the organizations. While such additional activities as tours or safaris are not only the part of fundraising programs but also are emphasized as “salaries for guide tours or transportation expenses” (see Hindman 2014, p. 49). Volunteering has been emphasized as a purposeful recreational and learning activity which adjusts the co-existence, learning, sharing, humane, caring, progress, and sustainability (see Singh & Singh, 2004, pp. 183-184).

Volunteer tourism is a wide ranging complex phenomenon which is further discussed from several research perspectives. In the first place, it is important to emphasize the *categorization* of volunteer tourism and how it is classified by the academics. Thus, the mainstream is drawn by Callanan and Thomas (2005), Holmes and Smith (2009) who divide volunteer tourism as shallow, intermediate and deep volunteer sectors which describe volunteers and projects based on the participant skills and placement duration (Table 1):

Table 1. Classification of volunteer tourism

Type of volunteering	Project characteristics	Volunteer motivation
<b>Shallow volunteer tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ short duration</li> <li>→ no specific skills or qualifications</li> <li>→ little or no pre-project training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ self-development and self-interest</li> <li>→ gaining academic skills enhancing CV</li> <li>→ ego enhancement</li> </ul>
<b>Deep gap year volunteering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ long duration</li> <li>→ specific skills and qualification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ altruistic motives</li> </ul>
<b>Intermediate tourism volunteering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ some skills or experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ altruistic</li> <li>→ self-interests</li> <li>→ want to contribute to the project or local community while having "holiday time"</li> </ul>

Based on Callanan and Thomas (2005), Holmes and Smith (2009)

This classification of volunteer tourism shows that shallow volunteering has a little contribution to the local community. And this resulted by the volunteers who are lacking specific skills. In addition to that, shallow volunteer tourists are seen as those who spend more time on trips rather than on real volunteering. Those volunteer tourists contribute little to the host communities but require more from the destination which offers exiting off-site trips. Thus, the short-term volunteers are prioritizing the leisure attractiveness and are closely associated with the mass tourists who visit alternative destinations during the volunteering time (see Callanan & Thomas, 2005). Secondly, deep gap year volunteering contribution is based on the volunteer and their specific skills requirement. And last, intermediate tourism volunteering promotes the value of the projects with travel elements.

Volunteer tourism participants are usually seen as those “volunteers who travel” or in other words as those “international volunteers, rather than travelers who volunteer”, mainly known as “volunteer tourists” (Holmes & Smith, 2009, p. 13). Holmes and Smith (2009, pp. 13-14) distinguish three types of volunteer tourism and its travelers:

- *voluntourism*: people who are devoting only a small part of their time volunteering “the traveler dedicates a portion of time to rendering voluntary service to a destination” (Hawkins et al., 2005, p. 13). Brown (2005, p. 492) calls those volunteers as being “vacation-minded”. Voluntourism usually takes short-time around two weeks’ period.

- *volunteer vacations*: when the entire trip is devoted to voluntary work. Brown (2005, p. 492) indicates those volunteers as being on a “volunteer-minded” mission. In this case, the voluntary element is a prime motivation and such trips last longer period from one month up to three months.

- *gap year volunteering*: last from 3 to 24 months when participants combine travel, volunteering, internship or study (Jones, 2004). Usually, it is well known as a period after high school or before/after university studies. However, there is also a new segment for “adult gap year” when people want to take career breaks or to look for some changes in their lifestyle. Millington (2005) defines gap year as a particular period when a person delays further education or career and decides to travel instead.

Furthermore, it is essential to accentuate the target group of volunteer tourism which involves adventurers, fieldwork assistants, volunteers and travelers (Weeden & Boluk, 2014, p. 2). According to Vradi’s (2013, p. 28) research about volunteer tourists, she states that volunteers

are signing up for a hope of “helping out” and “giving back” while in the destination are “not feeling needed”. Vrasti (2013, p. 28) suggests the reasons for it: either it is because locals are not “poor enough” or because programs are “not equipped to deliver humanitarian support”. While the tourists are always changing characteristic Singh and Singh (2004, p. 182) call volunteer tourist as a “new tourist” that “appears to be an inward-looking individual who seeks out places and people with whom s/he can engage meaningfully, without the barriers of color, class, creed or caste”. Summing up, the target group of volunteer tourists is defined as youngsters who are taking a gap year after school, or during the summer period, when they have more free time for volunteering. It is also essential to analyze the motivation of volunteer tourists and to know what are the main reasons they are choosing volunteer tourism.

Another stream of the research in volunteer tourism is focusing on volunteers’ *motivation* and what kind of factors are influencing their decision to go for a volunteering project. Volunteer tourism motivation is a well-researched area (Wearing, 2001; Campbell & Smith, 2006; Clifton & Benson, 2006) and the leading tenor of those is that people choose to volunteer for personal, as well as, for altruistic reasons. In most of the cases, people have some preferences, either they know that they want to develop language skills or to get a better understanding of the particular culture and its traditions. According to Wearing (2004, p. 216) motivation is an “ultimate driving force that governs travel behavior”.

It is crucial to understand and analyze the motivation which drives young people to volunteer in a foreign country and, for example, not in their own because volunteering as an intention is very similar in many countries. Certainly, if the person wishes to volunteer and donate the time it is not necessary to travel far to provide help: there are always many other opportunities like hospitals that accept voluntary help, summer schools for kids, refugee camps and other places where the help is needed. However, both altruism and tourism are those forces that are found in the concept of volunteer tourism, so it is essential to define what are the main reasons people traveling to volunteer. Wearing (2004, p. 217) stress that internal push motives are important for traveling. Mostly, scholar points out discovery, enlightenment, personal growth, but also emphasize that features of the destination are more than “simply pull motives”. Thus, Boluk and Ranjbar (2014, p. 138) identify that the mixture of “hedonism via tourism”, apparently, is crucial competent of the traveler choice to volunteer in another country. According to Wearing (2004, p. 217), the physical locations of the developing countries for

volunteer tourists are stronger, because young people are appealed by the “elements that make up a mainstream tourism experience”.

Wearing (2004, p. 216) also notes that the satisfaction which volunteers gain is coming not only from experience, but also “from the external reward of having promoted community development and environmentally sound travel and having made a contribution to the destination”. Kolehmainen (2014, p. 127) describes that volunteer tourism has been behind the “desire among contemporary volunteer tourist”, self-improvement and contribution to the communities that nowadays has been shifted to the “formative space for those wishing to shape the future of global development”. It means that volunteers are motivated to develop self, but also are attracted by the idea of having an impact on communities. Boluk and Ranjbar (2014, p. 134) point out that volunteer tourists seek “to prioritize certain discourse in an effort to situate themselves as well-intentioned, altruistic and self-sacrificing”. Those discourses are overpowering other hedonic motivations such as exploring a new part of the world and new cultures, practicing language skills and building an attractive CV (Boluk & Ranjbar, 2014). Pearce (1993, as cited in Wearing, 2004, p. 216) adopts Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs”, and explains that the typical tourists are more concerned to fulfill lower level needs, while volunteer tourists are more concerned about fulfillment which includes education. In this case, education means learning about the destination, people, language, and interpretations of the natural environment. The primary motivation is usually accentuated as help to others, whereas traveling stands as a secondary, and is it as a significant influence on the overall experience.

Other streams of research do focus on the *benefits* which travelers can gain through volunteering work, in addition to the qualities which are imminent to those people and are favorable in the current labor market. Several academics (Wearing, 2001; Brown, 2005; McGehee & Santos, 2005) have proposed a number of intangible benefits that volunteer tourism has, such as personal growth and intercultural understanding. For example, Vrasti (2013, p. 84) mentions that volunteers tend to be more “mobile, productive and ahead of the creative curve”. She relates volunteering with moral virtues and cultural competencies which are favorable assets by many organizations as “versatility, open-mindedness, tolerance, creativity expected from the globally mobile workforce” (Vrasti, 2013, p. 84). Singh and Singh (2004, p. 192) noted that volunteer tourism provides the opportunities for personal communication between the volunteer and the host. Also, encourages the understanding of

cultures that leads to acceptance of reality and reduces the “cultural shocks”. Other academic suggests that volunteers who discover the enjoyment and adventurous sides of volunteer tourism tend to return after years and strength their self-identity through the understanding of “others” (Wearing, 2001). Notwithstanding, volunteer tourism also serves self-construction in “objectified destinations representing cultural exoticism for the voyeuristic gaze, fleeting pleasure, and individualized escape of visiting tourists” (see Wearing & Ponting, 2009, p. 255). Thus, volunteer tourists create an image of self as being a charitable non-tourist while enjoying touristic activities.

Wearing and McGehee (2013b) suggest that international volunteering provides alternative tourism experience which includes a cross-cultural exchange between the volunteers and host communities. Similarly, McIntosh and Zahra (2008, p. 179) advocate that within volunteer tourism the interaction is more intense rather than superficial: “a narrative that is engaging, genuine, creative and mutually beneficial”. On the one hand, Wearing (2001) explains that either volunteer and hosts are sharing exchange without any power relations. While on the other hand, Guttentag, (2012, p. 156) disagrees and adds that power inequality exists because volunteers are “privileged” donating their time, while “unprivileged” community is receiving their support and assistance.

A related point to consider is that the sector of volunteer tourism has not always been viewed from the positive attitude. It is essential to deliberate the stream of current *criticism* which is discussed not only by academics but also by volunteers in social media. This part elaborates the stream of critical research on volunteer tourism on micro and macro levels. In the first place, Vrasti (2013) takes a critical perspective on volunteer tourism and suggests that volunteer tourism is based on the political subjectivity of neoliberalism where volunteers desire to develop professional self and might not provide any social changes in South. In the study of Vrasti (2013, p. 82) about volunteering in the Global South, she analyses how volunteers perceived San Andres in Guatemala. Scholar provides the opinion of her interviewee who felt that volunteering is more valuable for students even though it does not require any skills or results: “it is unfair that, at job interview, it matters more if you have volunteered” than waitressing because it is “much harder and it shows you need the money” instead “volunteering only shows your parents are rich”. The opinion expressed in a very rational way concerning that the interviewee was from Eastern Europe and came to volunteer

on own expenses. Vrasti (2013, p. 50) analyses volunteer tourism through the lens of neoliberal state practices and global flows of capital. She describes volunteer tourism as a “carefully designed technology of government that can be mobilized to perform various functions, governing communities /.../ without direct spending, investing individuals with social and emotional competencies needed for producing value in communicative capitalism”. In this case, western youth receives such skills like rationality and moral responsibility. Hindman (2014, p. 49) who was researching about the value for volunteers in Nepal, also takes a critical stance to volunteering and remarks sharply that volunteering experience is seen as “internships, resume lines and productive “time-one” when law school applications fail”.

Further, Guttentag’s (2012) criticism stands towards unsustainability of volunteer tourism. Scholar claims that volunteer tourism is lacking sustainability because of its short-term projects and benefits. He illustrates how “host communities learn to rely on external sources of assistance” without taking into consideration that one day “immediate gains can end up” (see Guttentag, 2012, p. 153). Another issue he emphasizes is that volunteers reduce job opportunities for locals as they provide free labor force and enhance labor market competition. In addition to that, Van Engen (2002, p. 21) who was criticizing short term missions’ states that volunteers are doing work “that could be done (and usually done better) by people of the country they visit”. In short, as it was suggested by academics, structural changes are needed to provide long-term projects and accept only skilled volunteers who could minimize negative impacts brought by commercialized volunteer tourism.

Nonetheless, the reasons why volunteers frequently lack professional skills are highlighted by Brown and Morrison (2003, p. 77). Commonly, it is because organizations do not have any requirements needed for voluntary work. So far, today’s labor market value volunteering experience as a quality, no matters the importance of how it was gained. As Brown and Morrison (2003, p. 77) enlighten: “the only skill that is required /.../ is the desire to help others”. Of course, it is possible to do simple tasks without pre-training or expert knowledge. On the other hand, a quite critical issue is that many volunteers are appointed to teach in schools even though they are just high school graduates. It is doubtful that, for instance, parents of European kids would like to see their children learning in schools with unskilled teachers.

Another critical issue concerns either volunteers' help is fulfilling the needs of communities: "volunteers may hold opinions on relevant issues like development and conservation that are inconsistent with the needs and wishes of the host communities" (see Guttentag, 2012, p. 155). Further, many volunteer tourism projects organized by private enterprises are criticized because of the primary interest in earning a profit (Guttentag, 2009). However, the criticism is also seen on the side of NGOs even though the organizations are perceived as doing "all good", however, "one should not assume that NGOs will always consult closely with host communities" (see Lyons & Wearing, 2008, p. 8). Guttentag (2012, p. 155) raises the issue of an organization's goals versus communities' goals and finds that in most of the cases they differ from each other. It is seen that conservation projects run by NGOs are, sometimes, against the wishes of local communities (Butcher, 2007, pp. 70-71). For example, local accommodation entrepreneurs are eager to develop tourism in the area and are trying to ensure that the benefits of volunteers would increase local economy. While the volunteers and the staff from the projects might be seen as those, who are limiting the development in the towns because of its unique environment and nature (Guttentag, 2009).

Currently, critics in social media are going beyond the sphere about the volunteer tourism. Nowadays, media commentaries of volunteer tourism show the criticism in many aspects such as economics, neo-colonialism, north, and south, or education. It was argued by Palacios (2010) that western youth are too young to volunteer in underdeveloped areas and it creates the form of neo-colonialism. There are different attitudes and different stories telling another side of volunteer tourism. Like the quotation by writer Pippa Biddle who was talking about her experience in Tanzania: "turns out that we, a group of highly educated private boarding school students, were so bad at the most basic construction work that each night the men had to take down the structurally unsound bricks we had laid and rebuild the structure" (Zatat, 2016). The discourse of the volunteer accompanies critiques by academics about unskilled volunteers assisting in tasks which are not in their competencies.

Growing Instagram hit is the "white savior – Barbie" which is registering the imaginary of volunteer journey. This sarcastic account creates the images with Barbie and stories behind.

I just landed and I'm crying because of the beauty...then crying because of the heartache. Then when I realize the clean water my eyes are wasting by just CRYING... I cry some more because I don't know how to harness my tears yet. Oh, Africa. You really know how to make me soul search! (Zane, 2016)



The makers of Barbie Savior are trying to change the attitude people have, and especially of westerners: “The attitude that Africa needs to be saved from itself, by westerns, can be tracked back to colonialism and slavery. It’s such a simplified way to view an entire continent” (Blay, 2016). Barbie Savior’s initiators are paying particular attention to the unqualified volunteers who are doing jobs that they would never be allowed to do back home. Additionally, authors of Barbie Saviour are not aiming to offer the solutions for volunteer tourism, but are trying to sparkle the discussion and raise the awareness about the white savior complex. The complex of white savior most of the times refers to westerns who believe in “saving the world” or solving the problems which mostly occurs in developing countries (Edell, 2016). The dark side of the desire to help in developing countries also raises many questions when talking about orphans. The formal study shows that quarter of children in orphanages do have both parents, but still, they are forced to work as “orphan” (Birrell, 2010). There is a huge business venture going in such country as Cambodia and some other.

Another critical perspective was taken by the campaign videos on social media: “Let’s save Africa: Gone wrong” and “Who wants to be a volunteer”. The Students’ and Academics International Assistance Funds (SAIH) have been working on how to reinforce the image of Africa and how to educate people and reduce the stereotypes (SAIH, 2016). The awards are aiming to change the perspective on fundraising campaigns and engage people in issues of poverty and development. More than that, they are addressing the topic about NGOs and how their communications play a significant role in understanding the developing world. These critics of volunteer tourism highlight its miscommunication between volunteer, sending-receiving organizations and hosting communities; differentiation of their motives, goals, visions and strategies; also its inability to promise for the participant the feeling of making a positive contribution, instead of disappointment.

### **2.3 Commodification in tourism**

Nowadays one can buy almost every imaginable product or service on a globalized, free market where seemingly unlimited demand meets endlessly productive supply. In early ages, the commodity was defined by Marx (2001, p. 36) as “an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another”. In other words, the commodity is any good or service offered in the marketplace. Appadurai (1988, p. 3) describes commodity

as a concept of economic exchange which creates economic value in exchange for money. He suggests that commodities are objects of economic values. Whereas Marx (2001, pp. 36-37) distinguishes two types of values: use-value and exchange value. Use value differs from exchange value in the sense that the former refers to usefulness which cannot be quantified, while the latter is characterized by its exchangeability with other commodities which are quantifiable (Fine, 1975, p. 20). Firstly, use-value refers to physical properties of commodities, and this value materializes only by use or consumption. Secondly, the exchange-value indicates that use-value of one sort can be replaced by another sort. It means that exchange value is traded as a commodity in exchange for another commodity. MacCannell and MacCannell (1999, p. 20) state that Marx was the first who emphasized the symbolic or fetishist meaning of the commodity: “its capacity to organize meaning and to make us want things for reason that go beyond our material needs”. This “ego enhancement” is essential rather than the purchasing of a new car, home or “new relationship”.

With respect to tourism, the idea of sign value is central as Watson and Kopachevsky (1996, p. 283) point out. They explain that products which are created by “human labor” turns into commodities at the “moment they are introduced into the flow of trade and exchange for other commodities”. In this case, authors also include services under the “product” name. In addition, tourism experiences are among such “products; experience and their delivery become commodities” (see Watson & Kopachevsky, 1996, p. 284).

Sociologist, philosopher, and critic Simmel (1957, as cited in Appadurai, 1988, p. 4) suggests that objects are not difficult to acquire because their value reveals the desire and the immediate enjoyment. Above all, the objects which people desire are “sacrifice of some other objects, which is the focus of the desire of another”. Such transactions are the foundation of our contemporary economy, which “consists not only in exchanging values but in the exchange of values”. Objects are defined as commodities, and commodities in the modern world refer to things which depend on a certain situation and in different social positions. The commodity is also focusing on “production, through exchange/distribution, to consumption” (Appadurai, 1988, p. 13). Nowadays, people tend to consume much more than in the past, and not only things that are tangible elements, but also services, cultures, and places.

MacCannell (1989) elaborates modern leisure tourism which started in the 1960s when people began to take part in guided tours in factories or museums of science and history as their “lifestyle”. The concept refers to a generic term for a specific combination of work and leisure which replaced “occupation” as the basis of social relationship formation, social status and social action (MacCannell, 1989, p. 6). In this vein, MacCannell (1989, p. 7) suggests that do-it-yourself kit, packaged vacations, entertainments, work-study programs are commodities which reflect “the modern fragmentation and mutual displacement of work and leisure”. Previously, people used to trade goods and services mainly needed in their everyday lives. The market was narrow in comparison with offers of today's civilized societies. To a certain extent, the value of objects changed according to the desire which is consumed and transformed into an experience in the field of tourism. Clancy (2014, p. 63) states that the product people consume in tourism is an “experience” which is made up of different goods and services. Shaw and Williams (2004, p. 21) emphasize that “tourism is conditional on the production and consumption of a bundle of services, goods, and ultimately experiences”. Williams (2004) points out that commodification in tourism is based more on “sign value” rather than on “labor, capital and natural resources used in production”.

Williams (1979, as cited in Gregory et al., 2009, p. 440) notes that commodification and the commodity expand “to every nook and cranny of the world we inhabit”. Every human activity relies on the commodity in our society marketplace. Whether the tourist eats at an Italian restaurant in Rome, visits Louvre in Paris or travels with “Tuk-Tuk” in India, they will be participating in the process of commodification. More and more people are seeking valuable experiences rather than an ordinary beach holiday. The tourism consumption is dramatically increasing in the society. Lee (1993, as cited in Shaw & Williams, 2004, p. 116) argues that consumer culture had its rebirth when mass consumption started to be unstable, and new diversified commodity forms were born. Furthermore, Shaw and Williams (2004, p. 116) compare Urry's (1995) post-Fordist consumption which is “less and less functional and increasingly aestheticized” with tourism consumption, and nowadays is seen in the process of “de-differentiation of tourism from leisure, culture, retailing, education, sports or hobbies”. Urry (2002, p. 14) parallels in “The tourist gaze” mass consumption and Post-Fordist consumption. Mass consumption includes that produced and almost identical commodities are consumed by masses. While in Post-Fordist consumptions emphasis is placed on consumption than production, where almost all aspects of social life become commodities.

In the modern world, new types of commodities appear, and the nature of commodity itself changes from the simplest goods to a packaged holiday: “from a pair of pants to a packaged vacation; from a piece of work to a piece of no-work” (MacCannell, 1989, p. 11). Mathieson and Wall (1982, p. 171) talk that tourists purchase not only a vacation as a package they also buy “culture as a package”. Mathieson and Wall (1982, pp. 171-172) propose the examples for a commodification of the culture such as Spanish bullfights, Maori poi dance or peasant markets are all “evident in the tourist resort of developed countries, where the cultural distance between hosts and guests is less marked”.

MacCannell (1989, p. 19) has been analyzing Marx's perspective on commodity and emphasize that every commodity has a price tag only because each commodity has the same “ingredient – labor”. The process of commodification means that value or work is turned into a commodity which is bought as a product or service. MacCannell (1989, p. 23) explains that value of tourism products, for instance, trips, shows, parades, events, sights and other situations are not determined by the amount of labor, on the contrary, the value of such products is a “function of the quality and quantity of experience they promise”. According to Shaw and Williams (2004, p. 25), tourism is an activity which seeks to increase the income. It is much easier to get money directly from tourists and locally - in situ. Based on these factors, the classification of tourism commodification process is described as following (Shaw & Williams, 2004, p. 25):

- *direct commodification of the tourism experience* - charges for using a “gated” tourist site;
- *indirect commodification* - services which are essential to support or add to the tourism experience (accommodation, meals, etc.);
- *part commodification* - where tourists provide labor that is not charged at the marketplace (self-catering accommodation, car rental, etc.);
- *non-commodification* - includes services provided by friends and family or visiting other valued but not “gated” tourist sites.

On the contrary, Serageldin (1999, as cited in Shaw & Williams, 2004, p. 24) proposes that tourism is a value in the economic framework. Scholar separates two types of value which are used the most in commodifying tourism: extractive use of value describes the payment of site e.g. entrance fee, and non-extractive use value is derived from the services that support the site.

Nonetheless, commodification in tourism is a critical issue because touristic consumption is related not only with the commodification but also with exploitation. Mainly, cultural and natural exploitation which refers to cultures or cultural artifacts belonging to “peripheral” peoples who are seen exploited by the advanced western capitalist societies (Bell & Lyall, 2002). Cultures are used in various ways such as traditional events and festivals, markets, tradition sites and other activities to consume by tourists. Urry (2002) argues that tourist experience is visual which is embodied by looking at particular objects which “act as signifiers of place, and mark them off as distinct”. Particularly, consumed touristic experiences are understood as a commodity of cultural events and arts or natural landscape, like the Himalayas mountains which are natural landscape consumed by masses of tourists. Usually, commodification in tourism is expressed through the mass tourism consumption and refers to cultural or sex commodification. According to Smith and Duffy (2003, p. 9), the commodity in a modern society is visible in many different things: “it is understandable that modern society tends to put a price on everything, to turn everything into a form of the commodity that, at least potentially, might be sold”.

Commodification is also a multifaceted concern with respect to volunteer tourism. Benson and Wearing (2012, p. 243) remark critically that volunteer tourism is an “exotic adventures with an implied altruistic philosophy, but are designed more to cater to needs of the tourists than the needs of the communities that they purportedly serve”. In this case, volunteering is increasingly commodified and packaged to suit the tourists who are usually gap year travelers consuming cultures of developing countries in order to satisfy their desire to help and to be a good world citizen. Castree (2003, as cited in Coren & Gray, 2012, p. 278) categorize six principles that commodification is stood upon privatization, alienability, individuation, abstraction, evaluation, and displacement. Based on these principles three components as the commodification of tourism are proposed: environmental, economic and cultural (Coren & Gray, 2012).

Environmental commodification explains how nature is commodified: in particular, how natural assets of the host communities can be commercialized and valued as revenue (Coren & Gray, 2012). Wearing (2001, p. 149) also points out that many tourism destinations are becoming mostly “polluted and degraded” in consequence of mass tourism. Further, economic commodification enlightens how volunteer tourism itself is seen as business: “the volunteer

tourist just becomes another consumer of a market product /.../ it is just commodified leisure /.../ commodification of experience occurs /.../ constructing unsatisfied need in order to foster demand” (Wearing, 2001, pp. 14, 34). In this regard, Cousins et al. (2009, p. 1070) explain that as a form of volunteer tourism conservation tourism is already “charged by highly marketable commodity” which combines “moral achievement of “making a difference” with the emotional reward of close, corporeal encounters with nature”. In many cases, the money that has been donated for the communities are remaining as an unanswered question by the organizers.

Cultural commodification refers to the “construction of commodities of difference” it might involve cultural events, festivals, art, and crafts that “meet the needs and expectations of the tourists”. For example, culture is consumed by taking a photograph which later is used by private cooperation and utilized as a marketing tool, “packaged, proceed and sold like fast food” (Wearing, 2001, pp. 39-40, 144). Social media is playing an extremely large role by marketing pictures of volunteering programs, or destinations in Third World countries. Especially photos of white westerns and black children are dominating the most. Youth is reinforced to do the same without thinking about consequences. According to Smith and Brent (2001, p. 23), tourism is always “keeping up with the Joneses” and the ability to share the story of the destinations, hotels, cafes, handicrafts, and even “experiences”. Academics state that at the stage of “millennium” tourism is “a prestigious consumable commodity” (Smith & Brent, 2001, p. 23).

Campbell (1983, as cited in Wearing & McGhee, 2013a, p. 31) compares consumerism with romanticism: “the cultural movement which introduces the modern doctrines of self-expression and fulfillment”. Most likely, short-term volunteer tourists are seen as consumers of the culture, community, and environment rather than as conservers. An example of practical conduct shows that a short time volunteering projects also include on-site volunteering activities which are provided by local tour guides or small entrepreneurs. Such activities are seen at some volunteer tourism organizations brochures: “provide community-based eco-tours, supporting the local people and the environment as well as giving you a more meaningful experience” (ConCert, 2016). In other words, short tours named under the volunteering projects are seen as commodities of the local communities, their traditions, cuisine and the life: “spend a night or two in Homestay and experience rural Cambodian life”.

Summing up, short term volunteering activities are constructed as the commodity mainly happening in Third World countries.

In the case of volunteer tourism, the distance between locals and volunteers is invisible because they are living together and exploiting the locals. As Mathieson and Wall, (1982, p. 172) expressed:

The commodification of culture has induced other undesirable side-effects: the abandonment of traditional occupations to participate in the tourist industry, entrepreneurial competition from sophisticated, non-local, retailing organizations, and the unequal distribution of wealth.

Volunteer tourism is commodified, when companies or organizations re/present otherness, influence individual imaginaries and engage with local people and places. Tourism industry creates a huge variety of experiences to explore other cultures, places, and people. The industry itself is transformed into the global consumerism and in relation to developing countries tourism, is processed by “otherness” which becomes a commodity to be consumed by tourists (Cole, 2007, p. 21). Usually, “otherness” represents poverty which is considered by westerns as an opportunity to explore cultural diversity and locals. However, McGehee and Santos (2005, p. 760) describe volunteer tourism as “utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need”. Volunteer tourists often seek environmental integrity and sense of community. According to Ateljevic and Doorne (2004, p. 297), the acts of consumption are seen as a commodity. Scholars suggest that this reproduction provided for individuals to engage in the collective consumption of “their” places, “their” cultural practices, “their” social life turned into commodities.

Mass tourism is involved and related to the power, which illustrates the “massified experience” including the “ideological level and the level of consumption” (see Watson & Kopachevsky, 1996, p. 288). In some destinations which provide volunteering experiences, the mass tourism is a very visible phenomenon. Caton (2014, p. 26) illustrates that today tourism market sells “embodied products” which are the mixture of “fantasy and experience” that are influenced by “raw materials on the geographical spaces, the cultural dynamics, and even the physical bodies of other human beings”. Wearing and McGehee (2013a, p. 29), claim that “in order to foster demand” commodification of experience occurs as “overwhelming extent”. Urry (2002, as cited in Wearing and McGehee, 2013a, p. 32) concludes that tourism experience always consists of the production, the consumption, and cultural differences. So the “nature” and other

“cultures” are seen as an attempts to commodify them by capturing an “essence” but never succeeding because the experience is only a “fleeting gaze”.

On the whole, the chapter represents the concept of commodification and how it is neglected in the field of volunteer tourism. Commodification is visible as a process in many spheres of people's lives. It is seen as product, service or experience which is produced by human labor and sold in the marketplace in exchange for money. Commercialism and increased consumer demand are the leading points to the commodification of volunteer tourism.

## **2.4 Decommodification as ethical concern in tourism**

Decommodification in tourism is a relatively new concept and has been explored by feminist theory, ecocentrism, community development, and post-structuralism (Wearing & McGehee, 2013b, p. 129). The feminist perspective was taken to understand how experience is possible to differ along gender (Capra, 2004, pp. 230-231). A feminist approach concerns the understanding of the tourism experience in which all participants are included: hosts and guests, in particular “re-examination of the value of tourism” (Capra, 2004, pp. 230-231). Scholars Wearing et al. (2005, p. 450) emphasize that NGOs are the best example of such experience providers because of its diverse operations: “NGOs do not seek to exert excessive control, power or influence over local communities /.../ They emphasize a non-political, non-religious and not-for-profit charter enabling participant involvement that transcends gender, class, race, ethnicity, religious and political affiliations”. Because NGOs are not concerned about profit, their motivation and values are placed upon the personal growth, economics, social and environmental sustainability for the communities where volunteer tourism usually take place (Wearing et al., 2005).

Moreover, decommodification can be also explored from a community development perspective. A decommodifying approach to tourism research opens the way of exploration the potential of volunteer tourism, which is mainly defined as community-driven development and conservation. In this perspective, the only community is concerned as the main player in decision making and controlling the tourism implementation or development. Scholars discuss decommodification in tourism related it to the local and sustainable tourism niche. For example, Wearing and Neil (2009, as cited in Wearing & Wearing, 2014, p. 125) note “we



maintain that with the shift in the discourse to the local and indigenous, as we have done elsewhere and a more critical directive, there are opportunities to decommodify ecotourism in ways that will allow to serve its original purpose”. Academics suggest that decommodified approach moves from green consumerism to more sustainable ways addressing the inequalities of neoliberal reformism.

Further, Gray and Campbell (2007) studied a decommodified experience of volunteer tourism in Costa Rica through the lens of aesthetics, economics, and ethical values. Scholars adopted Wearing (2001) approach and compared commodification and decommodification by several aspects (Table 2).

Table 2. Differences between commodification and decommodification

Commodification	Decommodification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>resembles mass tourism;</li> <li>economic values are equating to profits that accrue by non-local companies;</li> <li>local environment and people are aesthetically consumed;</li> <li>tourists neither question these values nor seek to demonstrate more ethical values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gives the opportunity to alternative forms of tourism;</li> <li>economic benefits are locally retained;</li> <li>tourists are engaging in meaningful experience with local environment and people;</li> <li>tourists are seeking ethical engagement with local culture rather than enhancement of their own "cultural capital".</li> </ul>

Based on Gray and Campbell (2007, p. 479)

Since 1989 international tourism increased in less developed countries. Harrison (2002) characterizes tourists in two types: “quite literally they become sightseers but, in addition, they are tourists in a spiritual sense, searching for authenticity and value whilst beset by continuous change and uncertainty”. Wearing and Ponting (2009) suggest that volunteer tourism as an alternative form of tourism is the one that tries to create decommodified experience. Advocates noted that deep interaction with locals and the share of exchange of the cultures decrease the “otherness”, which usually shows the commodity. In the domination of hosts and guest system “could be broken” and the power between them could be minimized. It all depends on the volunteer contribution and the interaction with locals in the destination. Also, it depends on how skilled volunteer is, and how much s/he is acknowledged with the new culture.

Raymond (2012) notes that volunteer tourism functions properly when the needs of volunteers, organizations, and host communities meet in economically, socially and environmentally sustainable sense. In other words, sending and hosting organizations are in a position to keep good communication pattern among all parts involved (Raymond, 2012). For example, it is essential that time to time sending organizations are going and evaluating their projects, also guaranteeing that the program meets the expectations of all immersed in volunteer tourism. A decommodified approach to tourism research opens the way for exploration of tourism potential to provide the means for community-defined and community-driven development, and conservation of their environment (see Wearing & Grabowski, 2011, pp. 193-210).

A sustainable approach to volunteer tourism is also seen as a tool to decommodify volunteer tourism. Hensel (2012) base sustainable volunteering on three pillars: knowledge share, financial support, and physical presence. Scholar illustrates the process of sustainable mini-missions, which is adopted by volunteer tourism organizations (Figure 1).

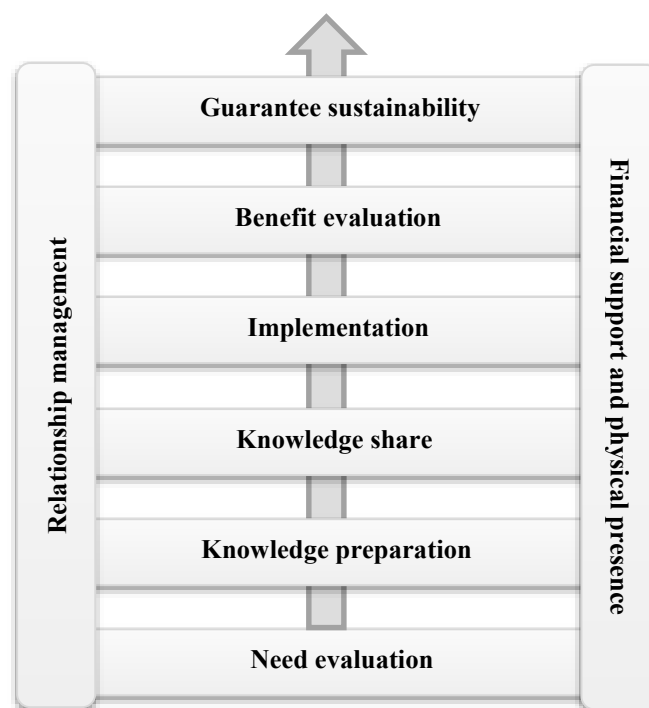


Figure 1. Steps for sustainable missions. Source: Hensel (2012, p. 253)

Shortly, the process of sustainability suggests that organizations first have to evaluate the needs of the communities. In the second place, they are obligated to provide the training for the volunteers. The third emphasis is on the knowledge management and establishment of long-term communication between stakeholders. Further, organizations should implement

projects with the real benefits which could be measured by projects evaluation process. And lastly, it is important to guarantee the outgoing success of the project. This model provides the key to successful volunteer tourism development where the needs of communities are highly evaluated while building the relationship between sending and receiving organizations. Also, good training based on skills-segmentations could avoid negative impacts of volunteer tourism. (see Hensel, 2012)

Butcher (2007) describes decommodification of volunteer tourism as a cross-cultural experience of volunteers and hosts. Additionally, to achieve a cross-cultural understanding Raymond and Hall (2008a) propose three components for volunteer sending organizations. In the first place, organizations should be orientated in developing those programs that benefit the community. Secondly, it is essential to ensure that the programs are recognized as a learning process and not as an experience. And lastly, organizations are responsible for facilitating the cultural interaction between the volunteer and the host community. More than that, Wearing and Grabowski (2011) suggest implementing these guidelines for the decommodified approach of volunteer tourism to achieve intercultural exchange through volunteer tourism. Also, McGehee and Andereck (2009) advocate to regulate the number of the volunteers and pay particular attention to those who have specific skills or expertise. Scholars recommend that it is important to reduce the quantity of the participants while matching volunteers' skills with needs of the community.

Mostafanezhad and Hannam (2014, p. 8) pay attention to the tourism consumption and its commodification, where "morality and consumption are deeply intertwined". Nonetheless, Smith (2014) also argues that volunteer tourism is always immersed into the ethical concerns or "ethics of care". However, it is important to analyze moral philosophy which shapes the understanding of the values in volunteer tourism. Decommodification as a moral discussion opens the pattern for an exploration of normative ethics in tourism such as utilitarianism, ethical egoism, and deontology. The following part elaborates the ethical theories and discussion of what is deliberated to be good in the context of volunteer tourism.

Criticism of volunteer tourism possessed on social media attracts careful attention to re-think about ethical meanings of volunteer tourism. Nowadays, so many backpackers, students who are taking a gap year, or other young people are choosing volunteering trips without any in-

deep research about the organizations, their activities, and operations. Neither they think about possible impacts that they are creating on the communities in developing countries. Recently, such considerations have been addressed by the press in The Huffington Post and The New York Times:

What difference does voluntourism make? Does voluntourism actually contribute anything worthwhile to international development, or would the world be better off without it? (Pinfold, 2016)

Who's to blame: the students or the adults who set it up this way? And if that's service work, why not address all the need in your own backyard? Why is it fashionable to spend \$1,000-plus, 20 hours traveling, and 120 hours volunteering in Guatemala for a week? Aren't the children there sad, getting abandoned by a fresh crop of affluent American teens every few days? (Bruni, 2016)

Indeed, questions addressed in press leads to the moral thinking of value in volunteer tourism. The reasoning of all these issues is not about finding who is wrong and who is right, but it is all about desires, intentions, values, commitments, affecting others, and making decisions (Grace & Cohen, 2013). The importance of this reasoning is to find the ethical discussion of actions and decisions, rules and outcomes. Considering its origins, ethics are derived from Greek word *ethos*, which is related to "habitual mode of conduct" (Fennell, 2006, p. 54). Consequently, ethics stands upon the rules and principles while morality is about the beliefs of right and wrong, good and bad, judgments about the values and rules, principles and theories (Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013, p. 20). However, both ethics and morality are very related to each other and shape the behavior of individuals in society. In fact, this similarity of ethics and morality leads to the moral thinking and reflectivity.

Consequently, understanding the ethics, it is important to distinguish what is considered to be a value. According to Lovelock and Lovelock (2013, p. 21), the value in ethics is described as a moral value that is judged by its good or bad, and most of the values are applied to the personality traits, motives, intentions, and actions. Cleveland (1994, as cited in Swain, 2001, p. 230) notes that science can "allow us to predict the results of our actions, [but] it cannot answer such value-laden questions as what is right and wrong". Humans should keep the discussion open and acknowledge that their cultural values shape the objectivity (see Swain, 2001).

Ethics in tourism are analyzed from various angles and perspectives. Caton (2014, p. 26) discuss either moral aspects in tourism are considered more about the “rights to space”, “rights of representation and narration of meaning” or “rights and responsibilities on the interpersonal interaction of performing and gazing”. Ethics in tourism are usually formed as codes of ethics, prescriptions, and proscriptions which, according to Fennel (2009), are created to shape the act of individuals or groups keeping in mind sociocultural, economic and ecological considerations. Likewise, Caton (2014, p. 27) indicated that the idea of moralization in tourism is difficult to cope with, because of the self-centered tourists who are always motivated to satisfy “the needs and desires of the self”. Scholar clarifies that people are traveling for pleasure, escape, rest, and personal development and usually do not understand that they are consuming the bodies, cultural inheritance, and “use them as objects in creating our stories of self” (Caton, 2014, p. 27). The reasoning why individuals are driven to achieve particular purpose is studied from the teleological point of view.

As a matter of fact, teleology explains the approaches that suggest whether the act or an action is good or wrong and it depends on of the consequences of the performance (Brody, 1983, as cited in Fennell, 2006, p. 67). Teleology is dominating by utilitarianism, hedonism, and egoism, in the following part, the ethical theories will be emphasized in more details. Utilitarianism stands upon the moral actions of the “greatest good to the greatest number of people” (Smith & Duffy, 2003, p. 56). Today, the enjoyment is one of the most important reasons while traveling or having a holiday. Hedonism plays a significant role in constructing the utilitarianism (Smith & Duffy, 2003). This moral outlook gives basics of “tendency to promote happiness” and is considered that “what makes people happy is good” and on the other hand, “what causes pain is bad” (Smith & Duffy, 2003, p. 55). In other words, utilitarianism is about the right and wrong and as Smith and Duffy (2003, p. 55) argue that this thinking leads to the “constantly changing needs” of people. In the case of volunteer tourism, people feel enjoyment and pleasure by devoting their time to do voluntary work. Nevertheless, it is questioning whether similar pleasure is also felt by the communities they are volunteering. Above all, Fennell (2006, p. 70) criticizes the utilitarianism and considers the matter of social justice. He argues that in order to maximize the happiness for the greatest good it could be achieved in exclusion of minority: “mild happiness of the majority may severely outweigh the misery of few”. What is good for collective in this case for tourists, it does not mean that is good for the local people, cultures, or environments.

By the same token, utilitarianism is divided into act and rule utilitarianism. In act-utilitarianism, the act of each individual is considered as a moral obligation that is produced with the balance of pleasure over pain, or of the desire satisfaction for the overall well-being (Fennell, 2006, p. 69). Identically, pleasure here is understood in all its forms from simple physical to aesthetical. Comparatively, pain encompasses not only physical but also less tangible pain which leads to more emotional e.g. sorrow (see Jamal & Menzel, 2009). According to Smith and Duffy (2003, p. 66), act-utilitarianism is orientated into the rightness or wrongness of the specific action and its consequences. By contrast, rule-utilitarianism judges the actions that are followed by rules based on the evaluation of the consequences that occurs when “everyone in similar circumstances acted a like manner” (Smith & Duffy, 2003, p. 66). Fennell (2006, p. 70) discusses that the rightness of these actions becomes as a function of certain rules. To bring happiness to the greatest number of people, we need to obey the rules.

Utilitarianism as an ethical theory is also applied in volunteer tourism. For instance, volunteer tourism consists of volunteering and traveling, which cannot be separated. As a matter of fact, while traveling to the project destination, volunteers became as tourists even though they have good intentions to “help others” and to gain “international experience”. In this case, the pleasure of traveling and the good altruistic motives are seen as good and bad in the context of ethics. For one thing, international volunteering is good because many people are helping communities in South. In fact, volunteering does not mean going somewhere far away; it is also easily applied at the national level. Particularly nowadays when the assistance is needed dealing with such issues as a refugee crisis, economic crisis, unemployment, climate changes, etc. In this vein, doing good for the greatest number of people does not require to travel far. Moving from individual level to the social groups Smith and Duffy (2003) ascribe that the actions are good when they increase the pleasure of that particular group. Similarly, actions are good when they decrease the pain of the community. By contracts, international volunteering is more attractive for young people who have a desire to travel and experience another culture without thinking about possible negative impacts. Additionally, utilitarianism is often related to the mass tourism (Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013). In utilitarian case, mass tourism gives the pleasure for the biggest amount of people, whereas the development of tourism in the touristic destinations possibly brings the pain for local people or the environment.

The second dominant approach to ethics is egoism, which is described by Frankena (1963, as cited in Fennell, 2006, p. 71), characterized as following 1) one has a basic obligation the promotion of the greatest possible balance between good and evil; 2) in making second and third person moral judgements an individual should go by what is to his or her own advantage; 3) that in making such judgements an individual should go based on what is to the advantage of the person he is talking to or about. Correspondingly, Fennell (2006, p. 72) describes the egoism as selfishness and self-direction, which have different explanations. First of all, a self-directed person is always more orientated into personal actions and self. And secondly, selfish describes “negative and disapproving characteristics” (Fennell, 2006, p. 72). Fennell (2006) suggests that egoism is viewed from self-directed behavior rather than selfishness. Scholar argues that self-interest and altruism are related to each other. Tourists are “driven to satisfy” their needs while “the drive to help others may be strong enough to overrule” the selfish pleasure (Fennell, 2006, p. 72).

Egoism as an ethical discussion is seen in volunteer tourism especially when volunteers are motivated to choose international volunteering by altruism and self-development reasons (Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013). Egoism claims that helping others is done only when the individual realizes the benefits of their ultimate goal (Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013). Butcher (2012, p. 160) describes the desire to “make a difference” in volunteer tourism as “naive, self-centered or arrogant”. This is related to the egoism and self-directed motivation of going to volunteer because most of the time volunteers are eager to enhance their CVs with volunteering experience.

Within the upcoming modernity, millennials found themselves in the situations where they are considering doing right and engage in the ethical work “upon themselves in order to develop as individuals /.../ to become increasingly autonomous as they reach maturity” (Smith & Duffy, 2003, p. 54). Smith and Duffy (2003, p. 54) considers self-education experience associated with travels as “moral aura”, which constructs the “moral identity” for those individual travelers who concern and demonstrate the moral awareness and ethical issues. However, Simmel (1990, as cited in Smith & Duffy, 2003, p. 54) calls attention to the “self-formation in a moral sense” that is related to the “pure egoism” which describes how “virtue individualism falls into a moral self-absorption or downright selfishness”. The question of

who should show the ethically controversial decision Smith and Duffy (2003) address it to the moral governance.

Rarely, volunteering abroad is chosen because of altruistic motives. The phenomena of self-fulfillment and self-gratification are illustrated by a volunteer who was as a research object in Wearing's (2001, p. 70) studies:

I think most people would be lying if they did not say there was some selfishness in why they were going. Because it was real to benefit them, not just the environment and community /.../ even though it was really important.

In fact, Guttentag (2009) explains that when “one assumes that volunteer tourism is beneficial, then the idea that volunteer tourists are motivated by personal factors becomes completely irrelevant”. It gives the understanding that to attract volunteers, organizations or companies are trying to fulfill the motivation of the participant rather than needs of communities. Here the problem emerges because organizations and especially those private enterprises are trying to fulfill the needs and desires of tourist, where communities are left without any beneficial consideration.

Vrasti (2013) who researched about the volunteer tourism in the Global South suggests explanations how volunteer tourism goes in hand with ethical consumption, corporate social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship. Also, Vrasti (2013, p. 121) argues that even if volunteer tourism does not provide any contribution to the local communities, still it gives the opportunity for volunteers to build their resumes: “volunteers are invited to use very experience as an opportunity for self-growth and personal transformation”. So, even volunteers are doing good by providing aid work, still, at the end of the day, it is only self-centered action.

In line with theoretical discussion, deontology claims that the action is right or wrong even though it would not cause the greatest good for the greatest number (Fennell, 2006, p. 74). The individual is responsible for obtaining the moral principles or the moral rules by itself: “fulfilling duties and respecting rights lead automatically to something good” (Garcia-Rosell & Moisander, 2008, p. 3). Deontology stands upon the all normative rules, guidelines, duties and principles that have been proved by the society. Hence, this moral outlook the same as utilitarianism can be divided into rule and act domains. Rule-deontology is concentrating on the judgment that is more general and based on the intuitionist perspective or personal



viewpoints (Fennell, 2006, p. 75). While act-deontology suggests acting according to the rules which are based on knowledge of fact and the only possibility to “overrule this guideline is through more accurate knowledge” (Fennell, 2006, p. 76). Kantian deontology provides the basis for a golden rule which arguments to treat everybody equally as just you would like to be treated (Grace & Cohen, 2013). With this in mind, volunteer tourism, certainly, should hold equality for all parts involved: volunteers, organizations, and communities. Host communities are not treated as tourism elements, neither the volunteers are not seen as objects to conduct business or raise funding. Kant’s deontology approach is important in emphasizing human rights and human dignity (Jamal & Camargo, 2014). For NGOs which have ideological aims volunteer tourism as a form to conduct money is not acceptable in their practices. Even though organizations are collecting funds through the volunteers, they are also trying to add their part in community development.

In particular, ethical theories help to improve the practices of NGOs towards volunteer tourism. As Garcia-Rosell (2013) noted various ethical theories are “complementary rather than mutually exclusive”. As a matter of fact, it cannot provide one answer about volunteer tourism either is it good or is it bad, but it supports to improve the practices of NGOs in decommodifying volunteer tourism.

## **2.5 Role of non-governmental organizations in volunteer tourism**

The concept of volunteering is complex and embraces various understanding depending on cultures and organizations. Hence, volunteer tourism is such a complex market niche where many actors play an important role, for example, volunteers, tour operators, charities, NGOs, governmental organizations and the list continue even further. In particular, academics (Wearing et al., 2005) suggest that there is a possibility to change the negative attitude of volunteer tourism brought by commodity providing the best practices of NGOs. In like manner, the important emphasis of this study is given to the practices of NGOs that facilitate volunteer tourism which will be emphasized in the following section.

To begin with, after the World War I first NGOs practicing volunteering were established and known as “Save the children fund” and catholic church based “Caritas”. Subsequently, after the World War II, similar organizations started to dominate more in the society. Such NGOs

began to concentrate not only on post-war problems in Europe but also started to focus on development issues in the Third World areas with the idea of modernization, health issues or poverty alleviation (Kennedy & Dornan, 2009). One of the first organizations which started to develop programs for volunteer tourists was the non-profit British Trust Conservation Volunteers, founded in the 1950s and their projects involved communities, environment, and science (Wearing & McGehee, 2013b). Nowadays, the spectrum of activities is ranging from conservation to community or personal development (see Wearing et al., 2010). Fundamentally, the definition of NGO is represented by WANGO – World Association of NGOs and refers to those organizations which are considered to be a not-for-profit organization that are established by a governmental entity or by the intergovernmental agreement, and which are organized on a local, national, sub-regional, or international level (WANGO, 2004).

NGOs are also known as a “third sector”, existing between business and government. However, this strong relation of both sides brings the importance of responsibility, which reflects in many ways. First of all, NGOs stands upon transparency, accountability, honesty, and ethics. Secondly, organizations are providers of accurate information and are not aiming for personal or staff benefits (WANGO, 2004). These days, the spectrum of organizations is wider and much more diverse. In order to appreciate and understand volunteer tourism organizations, it is important to note that organizations are playing as a “gatekeepers” between the potential volunteers and the hosting communities (Wearing & McGehee, 2013a).

Considering volunteer tourism management, there are three main levels: sending, servicing and hosting organizations (Holmes & Smith, 2009). In fact, organizations can also operate on all three levels: as sending, receiving and servicing, however, their motivations, goals, and projects might differ heavily from each other. Hensel (2012) who researched about the volunteer tourism as mini-mission tourism, note that hosting organizations are those which benefit communities the most. Ideally, hosting organizations are responsible for taking into account the evaluation of the volunteers' skills, highlighting the community needs, and generate the social impacts. The following structure (Table 3) represents main characteristics of the volunteering organizations:

Table 3. Volunteering organizations division

<b>Host organizations</b>	Where participants undertake their activities on the destination	Charities NGOs Government Religious organizations Private business
<b>Sending organizations</b>	Providers who develop and organize programs	Public Private NGOs
<b>Servicing organizations</b>	As a link to the organizations and volunteers	Online platforms with wide range of volunteer projects

Based on Raymond (2008), Sherraden et al. (2008), Holmes and Smith (2009)

The rapid growth of tourism has been shifting non-profit volunteer tourism organizations into business-oriented commercial organizations which initiated the process of commodification (Coren & Gray, 2012). There is a huge interest of establishing NGOs on sustainability, ecotourism, responsible traveling which brought the new insights in developing tourism. Within the volunteer tourism NGOs are seen as alternative perspective providers which might minimize the negative impact brought by the market system. Diverse perspectives and ideological aims distinguish NGOs from for-profit organizations. Wearing and McGehee (2013a) emphasize that profit-driven organizations may have a different impact rather than NGOs. Scholars suggest that for-profit organizations may not have an interest in community development. Instead, the focus is on the customer in this case - volunteer.

According to Wearing et al. (2005, p. 428), NGOs have a different perspective on tourism “is not just an “industry” or activity undertaken for a “holiday” away from home”. In this place, they are aiming to practice tourism with good intentions, positive attitudes, and values in host communities. Volunteer tourism as a new phenomenon is recognized differently by all parts involved: academics, practitioners or participants. Mostly, NGOs which are funded by the non-tourism institutions are lacking awareness and understanding of the tourism industry. A huge number of organizations do not want to see their activities as being a part of tourism, because of existing categorization or maintained understanding as being “serious” than tourism is (McGehee, 2002). Kennedy and Dornan (2009) further argue that NGOs are considered as “alternative” way of development “as they break from the western concept or mainstream model of progress”. Furthermore, Wearing et al. (2005) discuss that NGOs play an important role in providing a better understanding of tourism. Likely, because organizations

are moving beyond the profit and giving the importance to social, cultural and ecological values of the local people.

Volunteer tourism was broadly researched from the locals' approach where in many cases NGOs were involved as study objects too. NGOs were researched as goalkeepers of sustainable tourism, ecotourism, social justice or pro-poor tourism, alternative tourism development (Wearing, 2001; Sin, 2010; Keese, 2011). Indeed, most of the time researchers have been focusing on the host organizations, and little research has been conducted about the sending NGOs. Mostly, volunteer tourism was examined through the NGOs acting as coordinators (Wearing et al., 2005; Keese, 2011) between the volunteers and locals, also from community capital approach (Zahra & McGehee, 2013) and how development programs are affected financially.

As follows, Lyons and Wearing (2008) argue that NGOs moved from traditional funding drivers to the fundraising which is brought by the volunteer tourism projects. In addition to that, Wearing and McGehee (2013b) suggest that non-formal learning, cultural exchange, and adventure fundraising tourism through NGOs are creating different approaches to volunteer tourism. For instance, scholars emphasize that there is a growing number of NGOs which are implementing recent innovation of fundraising adventure tourism. It was caused by the minimization of grants from traditional forms of revenue e.g. International Funds, Unions, etc. In this way, NGOs took advantage of volunteer tourism as a system to increase their resources through the new and modern methods. On the other hand, new fundraising technique also raises a negative approach and even commercialism, because many non-profit organizations are having touristic activities such as safari tours. Nonetheless, Lyons and Wearing (2008) pointed out that extended NGOs partnership with huge cooperation turns into the risk of losing the core activity from supporting locals to the commodification of volunteer tourism. In this vein, scholars argue whether philanthropic practices of NGOs are going beyond the marketplace and still can sustain the idea of volunteering.

Important to emphasize, that volunteer tourism has been researched from hosting NGOs perspective by Wearing (2001) who argued that volunteer tourism has its potential to be seen as a positive and impactful tool for community development. Moreover, Raymond and Hall (2008b) analyzed how organizations can manage pre-departure, preparation, and on-site

orientation in order to become agents of change in volunteer tourism. More than that, Kotler and Lee (2009) studied NGOs and raised the issues either not-for-profit sector is seen as socially appropriate to support community development. There is a risk that non-profit organizations which are working with foreign aid sometimes ignore to consider local needs and prioritize principal objectives. Such organization practices are seen as in “top-down planning” (Kotler & Lee, 2009). On balance, the philanthropic NGOs nature and commitment to the social causes have an ability to manage the projects and resources, for example, people, supplies, and money to benefit the society.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

The present study aims to understand how do Nordic NGOs decommodify volunteer tourism through their everyday practices using qualitative research methods within an interpretative paradigm. At a more general level, qualitative research usually focuses on observations and analysis of people experiences, acts, thoughts about themselves and the world (Bazeley, 2013). Three key elements adopted by Boeije (2010, p. 11) were elaborated in this study: looking for meaning, using flexible research methods enabling contact, and providing qualitative findings. First of all, empirical analysis of scientific sources was used to obtain and analyze data for the study at hand. Secondly, the theoretical framework was applied to guide the research. The literature review was formed with the priority of volunteering, volunteer tourism, commodification and decommodification as an ethical concern. Specifically, the study employed semi-structured in-depth interviewing with seven representatives from Nordic NGOs during spring 2016. The interviews were conducted via Skype program. For a deeper understanding of the methodology, the following figure illustrates the qualitative research process of the study (see Figure 2).

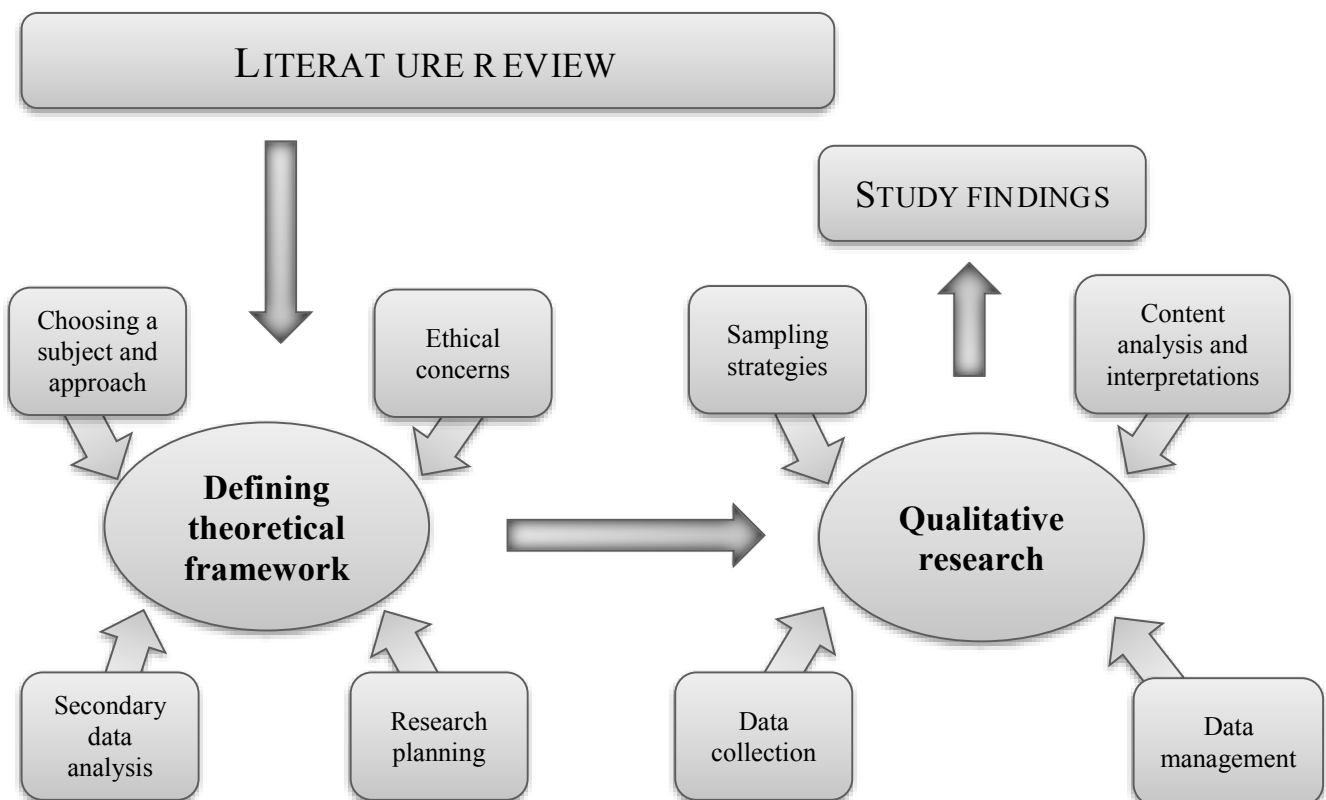


Figure 2. Qualitative research process of this study

Implementation of qualitative research started defining the theoretical framework from 20.11.2015 and lasted until 06.03.2016. The first stage was based on secondary data analysis, research question formulation, and literature review. Additionally, throughout the first stage research and analysis methods were measured. During the research planning phase from 07.03.2016 until 28.04.2016, the semi-structured questionnaire was formulated, and the interviews were conducted, recorded and later transcribed into data gathering form. The empirical process lasted from 01.05.2016 – 30.08.2016 when collected and transcribed interviews were analyzed using qualitative research content analysis methods within the interpretative paradigm. In the last stage 06.09.2016 – 25.11.2016 main categories and key information were analyzed emphasizing the results of the studied phenomenon.

Notwithstanding, it is essential to draw attention to the position of the researcher. Deniz and Lincoln (2000, p. 3) describe the character of “qualitative researchers [as those who] study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”. The researcher set to have a neutral position and let the reader decide whether or not decommodifying volunteer tourism could exist as an alternative approach to commodified volunteer tourism. Additionally, the researcher is not aiming to treat volunteer tourism as a social or economic phenomenon in tourism industry negatively. Neither the researcher is focusing on providing the guidance for NGOs or enhancing their practices in volunteer tourism. Subjectivity was chosen to position the researcher in this study by meaning that researcher is “aware of [the] values and predispositions and acknowledge them as inseparable from the research process” (see Ogden, 2008, p. 61). The interpretative approach through the research process was considered taking into account prejudices, bias and stereotypes about volunteer tourism field.

Regarding this study, the researcher had a position of controlling the interviews in order to collect empirical material. Concerning the richness of the information interviews were guided using the term of “international volunteering”. This was resulted and experienced by a researcher in previously conducted studies about “Youth motivation choosing international volunteering”. Obviously, while researching NGOs, it was impossible to avoid differences between researcher and participants in their personalities, research interests, and creating the meaning of outgoing interview (Jarvinen, 2000). As Bengtsson (2014) argues that by eliminating these differences researchers tend to create “new blind spots and holes” in the

resulting the data. Differences were also carefully thought by the researcher of this study. For example, differences in nationality, language, and social status. It was also taken into consideration that researcher has never engaged in volunteer tourism projects. In this case, the differences let researcher focus firmly on the situation without being influenced by the previous experiences of volunteer tourism.

### **3.1 Research context**

Fundamentally, the empirical context of this study involves the review of secondary and primarily data analysis. In the first phase, the empirical material was acquired from scientific sources including academic articles and books about volunteering, international volunteering, volunteer tourism, commodification, decommodification, and ethics. Reviewing secondary data on volunteer tourism enabled to be more acquainted with the theoretical understanding of the topic. The literature review was conducted to reflect on previous studies of this academic field.

The theoretical framework was later used to design semi-structured questionnaire which was used interviewing representatives from Nordic NGOs. The decision to choose Nordic NGOs as research context was strongly affected by several reasons. First, the field of volunteer tourism is broadly researched from the South perspectives, and little research contributes from the European side and especially from the Nordic countries. Moreover, Boeijs (2010, p. 34) notes that research location should determine the topic that is strongly related. In contrary, the focus to study Nordic NGOs was opposite to the principle of maximization. The main reason which led investigating the Nordic NGOs and not NGOs in developing countries was that little research has contributed to volunteer tourism from viewpoint of developed countries with high living standards. More than that, it was also important to explore volunteer tourism from the different perceptions of “North to South” (Vrasti, 2013). Secondly, studying and living in Finland for two years it was an underlying factor to analyze volunteer tourism and to get better insight into growing trend from Nordic NGOs perspective. Indeed, previous knowledge and assumptions about volunteer tourism studied during bachelors’ thesis about “Youth motivation choosing international volunteering” encouraged to expand the knowledge and focus on the supply side of volunteer tourism.



The questionnaire was formulated to discuss certain topics, including general information about NGOs background: aims, objectives, activities; as well as international volunteering projects, their participants, and volunteer tourism. NGOs that were interviewed for the purpose of this research concentrate either on the non-formal education, leadership development, youth, and peace, or community development projects. Mostly, organizations are working successfully around fifty years and were established after the Second World War about 1948 or in 1974, and just two organizations were founded recently in 2001.

All organizations are functioning as sending volunteers organizations, and some of them also receive volunteers. Besides, few operates as funding organizations that have their own projects on the site basically in African countries. Those NGOs that were interviewed are not selling directly the volunteering programs, but are organizing the places and arranging volunteering projects for young people. Usually, such organizations are sending from 3 to 200 volunteers per year and also receiving volunteers in their countries. Particularly, the most popular destinations which Nordic NGOs offer are Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Worth to mention the countries that volunteers from Nordic are going the most: Germany, France, Singapore, Peru, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Brazil, Honduras, Colombia, Kenya, Tanzania, Vietnam, Thailand, India, Nepal, and Indonesia.

The types of the projects that Nordic NGOs are involved includes teaching in schools, supporting local and global education, sports development projects. As a matter of fact, volunteers are also participating in community developing projects, human rights projects, social and public sectors, medical sector (e.g. tasks includes working with HIV and AIDS), environmental sector, and arts sector. On the contrary, some NGOs have fundraising projects, where volunteers have the possibility to work in second-hand shops, safaris or other adventure programs. The projects offered by Nordic NGOs possibly vary in length, including short-term and long-term volunteering. Briefly, short-term volunteering can last from 6 to 8 weeks, or 1 to 4 months, while long-term – from 3 to 12 months, or from 6 months to 12 months, and professional volunteering sometimes lasts up to one year. In parallel, the main target group is girls between 18-25 years old.

### **3.2 Data collection**

During the second phase of the study, data were collected through the semi-structured in-depth interviews with representatives from Nordic NGOs. Semi-structured in-depth interviewing was used with intentions to let the representatives speak about their organizations and practices of international volunteering, by guiding them only with a checklist of questions. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) point out that interviewing gives the opportunity for participants to share, pass on, and provide their own stories, knowledge, and perspectives.

Nordic NGOs were chosen using purposeful sampling method in order to enable inquiry into an extended understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002, p. 46). The purposeful sampling lies in the richness of the information to study in depth (Patton, 1990). Indeed, this method of sampling was selected to examine the representatives of NGOs who have a profound knowledge about the organization activities, functions, and operations. These organizations were chosen as examples for a number of reasons. First, the main criteria were that NGOs focus on international volunteering opportunities and are sending or receiving volunteers. Second, the criterion was that such NGOs are established in the Nordic: Finland, Sweden or Norway. Third, the representatives have a long-standing relationship and familiarity with the organization and are, therefore, able to present the organization with some depth. In addition, the criterion sampling was chosen for this study research, which assets predetermined criteria of importance (Patton, 1990). Also, important to mention that the purposeful sampling was selected considering that it gives “information rich” answers and offers “useful manifestations of the phenomenon” of the interest (Patton, 2002, p. 40).

All interviewees who participated in the study were from different organizations, except two representatives were from the same organization, but operating in different Nordic countries. Each representative had their own set of information to share during the interview, both in terms of their positions, as well as, different organizational aims and activities. For instance, two organizations are established in Finland, but are operating on another continent and are directly working with community development on the site. Both directors from these organizations were motivated to settle NGOs in African countries because they were volunteering there, visiting or by other personal reasons decided to relate their lives with these countries. Notably, it is important to distinguish that organizations which are working on-site

are orientating in community development projects, and others are focusing on personal volunteer development. Overall, four women and three men were interviewed. Worth to mention, that most of them have high positions in the organizations as like directors, managers, coordinators or secretaries.

Further, each organization that matched the criteria described above was contacted via email in order to arrange the interview date. A total of 14 organizations were identified and invited to have an interview. Worth to point out that only 8 representatives from Nordic NGOs agreed to participate in this study. Interviews were conducted using video communication program Skype and ranged from 40 minutes to one hour and sometimes longer. This method of data collection “mirrors face to face interaction” and are “geographically dispersed” (Sullivan, 2013). In the case of this research, the Skype program was chosen to reach easily all participants in the Nordic and to have reasonable sampling pool. Video-based software applications benefit today’s researcher’s role by allowing to interview “anyone anywhere” and to do it without imposing “on each other’s personal space” (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Hanna, 2012, p. 241).

Nevertheless, it is essential to mention that all interviews were conducted in the English language, tape-recorded and later transcribed. All transcribed interviews formed 79 pages of body text to use in the content analysis stage. After each interview participants were asked if they have something more to add or if they have other concerns regarding the subject.

### **3.3 Data analysis and reporting**

In the last phase, the interpretative method of content analysis and inductive use of theory were chosen. In qualitative research, inductive thinking gives the meaning that social phenomenon can be explored in order to find empirical patterns which function at the beginning of a theory (Boeije, 2010). Content analysis leads into the categorization of data for the purpose of classification and summarization (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Due to the purpose of the study, content analysis with interpretative paradigm was chosen to analyze the empirical material. Moreover, an inductive approach to the data analysis was used. A set of categories grounded in the data were also established, so the key themes that emerged were described by respondents using their own words (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The strategy of inductive design allows the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the case under study, without proposing in advance what the importance dimensions will be (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 56). Conventional content analysis was adopted in the study, which allowed to create categories from the flow of data instead of using preconceived categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this study, codes were used to analyze the empirical material, and coding according to Saldana (2009) is “not precise science; it’s primarily an interpretive act”. Principally, the empirical material was repeatedly read to achieve a better understanding of coding. As this process continued, the main categories and codes emerged from the data by marking important parts, thoughts, and impressions. According to the amount of empirical material, codes were created to reflect the themes of the questionnaire that formed the pattern for analysis. Coding, also, is essential in extracting the deeper analysis when categorizing the main patterns and getting different variations. In the case of this study, the simultaneous coding was chosen which applies two or more codes within a single data (Saldana, 2009). As a tool to assist in empirical material interpretations, the software program QSR NVivo was employed in this study. This particular program was very useful in enabling the easier process of text searches, codes and retrieval (Jennings, 2010).

To gain a comprehensive understanding of collected empirical material, the process of reviewing, reducing, re-reading, and re-writing was used several times through the whole research process. In the first phase of data analyzes the transcribed interviews were reviewed and the empirical material was reduced to have the main information concerning the study. Secondly, the empirical material was reviewed again using the program NVivo. During this stage, the important parts of the data were highlighted giving the codes which formed the pattern for the analysis. Later analyzing these codes main categories emerged from the interviews as follow: 1) Nordic NGOs position in the market; 2) decommodifying practices; 3) aspects of commodification; and 4) codes without the categories. In the third phase, the categories formed main findings and sub-categories were created to support most important issues. Nevertheless, those codes that did not match any categories were analyzed another time and assigned to the similar categories. The action of going forward and coming back to ideas is also described by Richards and Morse (2007, as cited in Saldana, 2009, p. 8) who stated that coding “leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea”. Further, interpretations were based linking empirical material with theoretical knowledge.

### 3.4 Research ethics

The moral accuracy in the research activities while socializing with participants before the interviews, during and after, were carefully considered. Particularly, this research follows the “Ethical principles of research in the humanities and social behavioral sciences and proposals for ethical review” by National Advisory Board on Research Ethics of Finland (2009). Indeed, three main dimensions were considered in the study: namely informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and anonymity (Boeije, 2010). In this section, these common ethical principalities will be discussed in more details.

First of all, such ethical issue as informed consent and voluntary participation was considered when arranging the interviews with NGOs representatives. Besides, it was necessary to have interviewees who were willing to share their knowledge about the organization and its practices. Sieber (2008) describes the voluntary consent as “ongoing two-way communication process between research participant and the investigator”. As a result, the study aims and objectives were presented by the email while arranging the date for the interviews. Also, at the beginning of each interview, the research outline was represented again, as well as, recording process was explained. It was clarified how the interviews were recorded for transcription and used only for the research purposes.

In addition, all information about organizations and representatives stayed confidential. Sieber (2008) connects confidentiality and anonymity into one ethical principle by suggesting that participant’s name or other private information would not be attached to the data. Ethical issues concerning the autonomy by quarantining anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees were briefly introduced in this research. By confidentiality, all participants were informed that information is not available to anyone who is not involved in the study. Therefore, such information about pseudonyms and privacy were represented before the interview started.

Furthermore, semi-structured in-depth interviews did not cause any harm or psychological issues, because interviews consisted only of questions related to the organization and activities they are doing. Finally, to protect the interviewee's identity, the findings will be presented without addressing quotes to a particular representative. Therefore, all names of researched

representatives from NGOs are as pseudonyms and marked by the letter “I” meaning interviewee and the number of the interview e.g. I1.

### **3.5 Reliability and validity**

The strength of the empirical material defines reliability and validity, or as Lewis and Ritchie (2003) suggest the importance of sustainable and well-grounded qualitative research. Thus, theoretical framework, carefully selected methodology, and empirical material ensured the validity and reliability for the findings and final conclusions in order to answer the main research question. This study provides the quality of research while using the same phenomenon repeatedly, measuring with same instruments which lead to the comparable outcomes (Boeije, 2010). The questionnaire was designed to be simple and did not touch any personal topics. Mostly, the responses from the interviewees were based on the context of that particular organization. Regarding the reliability of study at hand, the content analysis presents only primary information from Nordic NGOs which participated in the study. Additionally, all interviews were carefully conducted, transcribed and analyzed.

Important to note that the respondents were also given the opportunity to review and comment on the transcribed interviews to enhance the validity and reliability of the interpretative themes and conclusions drawn. As a consequence, one organization did not meet the criteria after the interview. Similarly, the representative from another organization after the interview contacted by e-mail and refused to give the consent to use the direct quotations in the study. Nonetheless, this interview was considered as very important for the study so, it was used in the content analysis without making any direct quotations. Furthermore, the transcribed interviews were revised several times by creating the codes. Also, reliability was maximized using digital data analysis tool NVivo. As Roberts et al. (2006) noted intensive engagement with empirical data and interpretations by moving backward and forward, making the links between them increases reliability and readability. The interpretations of empirical material reflect consistency and transparency.

The validity of the study was enhanced in regular supervision and peer review on analysis and findings (Roberts et al., 2006). According to Lewis and Ritchie (2003), validity describes whether findings can be transferred or applied to other groups within other settings.

Concerning this study, results are generalized to all NGOs within careful considerations and limits. It needs to take into account that organizations could vary differently by the country, culture, aims, objectives and structure. To a certain extent, this study results could be applicable also for profit-oriented organizations. Future research needed to ensure the reliability of the bigger sampling. As a matter of fact, the research provides just a small input, which could be a reliable source for future studies of volunteer tourism.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The study at hand presents an analysis of empirical material in order to answer the main research question: how do Nordic NGOs decommodify volunteer tourism through their everyday practices. It indicates Nordic NGOs practices of volunteer tourism in both commodification and decommodification. First, findings illustrate how Nordic NGOs position themselves in relation to the commercial organizations. Second, empirical data present what are Nordic NGOs concrete actions in decommodifying volunteer tourism. Lastly, the discussion elaborates Nordic NGOs obstacles in decommodifying volunteer tourism.

### 4.1 NGOs positioning in relation to commercial organizations

Even though volunteer tourism is a widespread phenomenon among western youth, thus research shows that the concept is not that well-known among NGOs in the Nordic countries. Interestingly, organizations are less acquainted with the terminology of volunteer tourism. Instead, they term as international volunteering, internships abroad or voluntary projects. In the following section, discussion elaborates Nordic NGOs unfamiliarity with the term of volunteer tourism, and how they are distancing themselves from commercial organizations. Moreover, it is important to note that the language of representatives from Nordic NGOs also plays a significant role in positioning themselves within volunteer tourism market.

In the first place, it is worth to mention interviewees responses when asked to describe their opinion about volunteer tourism. The unfamiliarity with the volunteer tourism concept was tangible in the speech of the representatives. Consequently, the question about volunteer tourism phenomenon raised emotional anxiety, discomfort or even small panic in the interview. In most of the cases, representatives were asking to repeat or rephrase the question and to be more understandable. At the same time, the pause after the question was longer than previous times, and some interviewees appeared to be confused answering this question. Specifically, some respondents had expressed themselves as following:

*I don't know, I don't know I don't get your, what is behind your answers, your question, I am not sure if I get it. (I1)*

*I am not sure that I entirely understand you what you mean. If you ask me how I understand it, I would say... I actually don't really know what it means. (I3)*

*I am sorry; I am not familiar with the term [of] volunteer tourism. (I7)*



The expressions exemplify that the question was unexpected and they were not prepared to answer it. The occurred uncertainty about the concept, involving questions, for example how they are positioning themselves in volunteer tourism, imply that NGOs want to separate themselves from tourism. Here, it is important to stress that the concept of volunteer tourism consists of two aspects – altruism and hedonism, which are contradicting to each other. First, altruism refers to the good will or aid work, while hedonism illustrates leisure time (Sin, 2009).

Nonetheless, those interviewees of the NGOs which are operating on-site were more relaxed when asked about volunteer tourism. The speech demonstrated that they are more familiar with the concept of volunteer tourism and its recent negativity. As one of the interviewees points out that *much of negative publicity coming [about] volunteering is because the young people are participating in orphanages or placed in the classroom as a teachers or something that should not happen* (I1). Even though, some organizations state that their activities are as a part of volunteer tourism. Still, they are trying to distinguish and create a barrier between the volunteering which is more associated with altruistic motives and the volunteer tourism which representatives relate to *young people [who want] to get an experience and in hope to help in the communities. They are, most of them they are not educated, so it is a typical part of the tourist, and it's a growing in tourism industry* (I1). Respondent characterizes tourists and, in this case, volunteer tourists, as those who are lacking knowledge and education. They do consider tourists as immoral consumers who desire to improve the lives of others (Caton, 2014).

#### **4.1.1 NGOs distancing from commercial organizations**

Although, the discourse of some Nordic NGOs demonstrated that they were trying to distinguish themselves from profit-oriented enterprises by differentiating their practices. Worth mentioning that, Nordic NGOs which are sending young people to another country for volunteering projects are classified as those organizations providing volunteer tourism activities. Here, it is important to understand how actors view themselves in the context of tourism. More than that, it is significant to note that Nordic NGOs do not want to see themselves as a volunteer tourism organizations and most of the time they claim to be different than for-profit organizations. NGOs are trying to separate their activities from commercial organizations' by stating that for-profit organizations have different aims or intentions. For

example, one representative noted that profit-orientated enterprises look for ways *to get money running the business and to make the profit* (I3). While NGOs' are working with idealistic purposes whose: *main goals [are] something else, for example, for us is peace in the world with human as potential /.../ and development [of] leadership skills* (I3). However, while commercial organizations focus on profits, Nordic NGOs are either developing the youth and personality or communities' well-being.

Consequently, Nordic NGOs are separating themselves not only by different goals or objectives but, also, they do not perceive their activities as tourism. For instance, one representative stated: *for our programs, specifically, it's definitely not tourism is an experience* (I3). The interviewee explains that *it's not this kind of chill out, it's more exactly getting the experience* (I3). Preferably, it was stressed that volunteers should be committed to the projects: *you have to be there if you committed yourself to go and dedicate your time six weeks to be there, you actually have to work at least twenty-five hours per week* (I3). It is apparent, that the representative relates volunteer tourism within hedonistic pleasure and relaxation, while in their programs volunteers are more immersed in charitable work. So far, the expressed opinion that volunteers are getting experience from voluntary projects provided by NGOs does mean not only work experience. By contrast, being in another country volunteers are also experiencing a new culture, people, and nature. Hence, NGOs are not considering tourism or traveling as a part of international volunteering, whilst they tend to deny their programs as it is much more than just tourism.

It emerged from the interviews that Nordic NGOs are distancing themselves from commercial organizations only because of tourism. Predominantly, volunteer tourism was strongly related to commodification and commercialization. Few representatives expressed their opinions as follow:

*when we talk about volunteer tourism its empowering economy, its second biggest part of the Tanzania incomes economies – tourism.* (I1)

*they [commercial enterprises] charge for that as a travel agency, significant amount of money.* (I3)

*just huge business /.../ way of making money for the societies in the developing countries.* (I4)

Here, volunteer tourism practices are related to economic growth, travel company or with a system of conducting money. All mentioned characteristics involve economic exchange which

illustrates commodification. In addition to that, other Nordic NGOs relate volunteer tourism to a “packaged tour” which costs a lot of money and in their opinion money does not necessary go to the communities. It appears, therefore, that Nordic NGOs are aware of the fact that for-profit organizations do not have clear financial division and doubting if money is making any contribution to the communities. One respondent described that *all the money and income stays overseas* (I1). As shown above, Nordic NGOs stands upon ideological aims and remain skeptical about volunteer tourism. Also, they tend to relate volunteer tourism only to commercialism which is against altruistic help.

Notably, lack of task management for volunteers appears to be another characteristic which distances NGOs and profit orientated enterprise practices. Some representatives ensure that for-profit volunteering companies are lacking organizational structure, others expressed that volunteering with commercial organizations is more similar to a job which requires workforce:

*but you go and work somewhere, I don't know, I would say cleaning a zoo or something, so it's like something very practical that you support with your, I would say labor force. Does not necessarily tight to any social issues... (I3)*

It serves the idea that Nordic NGOs visualize volunteer tourism as something related to business and physical elements of achievement. By contrast, research respondents are aiming to bring intangible social benefits which are related to learning or cultural exchange experience, while volunteer tourism they relate to tangible elements.

#### **4.1.2 NGOs placing on volunteer tourism market**

It is important to mention how Nordic NGOs place commercial organizations in the market, as well as, how they are positioning themselves. Thus, advertising style and the way for-profit organizations attract volunteers were pointed out during the interviews. Representatives noticed that commercial organizations have a strategy to attract as many potential customers as possible. Usually, those organizations are playing with volunteers' feelings and emotions (Smith, 2001; Cousins et al., 2009). One representative from Nordic NGOs illustrates the message as following:

*they promote what-what most people want /.../ they are more like to promote projects where you can pet lions, and like kiss elephants, at the same time as you are like helping kids in the suburb in Kenya /.../ so, they will, probably, right away volunteer in the*

*volunteer company they would feel “oh in this project I’m really needed, and I will save the world”. (I5)*

It is clearly stated that commercial organizations are seeking to sell the product according to their potential clients' demand. Western youth are creating “self” while reshaping the “physical landscape of other’s space” (Caton, 2014, p. 27). Nordic NGOs criticize the messages, which demonstrates that volunteers are “saving the world” through fun activities (Sin, 2009). Notably, hedonism plays an important role in the message addressed by the interviewee. The hardship, commitment, and charitable aid are not those attraction factors, which comes from altruistic values, instead, Africa and its nature are most appealing elements for volunteer travelers. It presents, however, that volunteer tourists are seen as new consumers of the natural environment and cultures, who are aiming to achieve emotional reward through “saving the world” (Wearing, 2001; Cousins et al., 2009).

In addition to this, it is important to emphasize that language brought the particular importance of how Nordic NGOs are positioning themselves in the marketplace while talking about their activities and volunteers. Nordic NGOs representatives tend to call volunteers as *travelers* or *interns* (I1), *exchangers* or *customer[s]* (I3), also as *exchange participant[s]* (I7). It seems evident that there is not a particular term to use to describe the volunteers. In other words, some NGOs have a tendency to use vocabulary that is related more to customer service and business language, while others use terminology similar to education. Despite the negative reflections of tourism researched NGOs, as described below, still consider their volunteers as tourists:

*their [volunteers'] position in the new society it can be very special, they have to be prepare that they will, probably, be treated differently, because they are tourists. (I5)*  
*from our perspective volunteers they /.../ most of them are volunteer travelers. (I1)*

Definitely, volunteers will always be seen as tourists – guests, not only by locals – hosts but also by other travelers. It is impossible to distinguish and not to take into account that those who are volunteering with NGOs are not tourists. Albeit, they are traveling to the projects, they are paying for the tickets, they are doing touristic activities, and in the meantime, they are involving with local people. Organizations are not able to change the understanding of volunteers because in the eyes of locals they still will be perceived as westerners.

Furthermore, the terms describing volunteer tourism services are also constructed differently. For example, they use terms such as *volunteering internships*, *volunteering exchange programs* or *internship abroad* (I3), *cultural exchange* (I5), *volunteer opportunities abroad* (I7). Thus, volunteering in few cases is targeted as internship abroad or work abroad, even though the meaning is the same. Remarkably, one representative did not like to use word volunteering, it was clarified as follow: *I again, I personally don't like the term volunteering, you keep using that, for me it's more experience and that makes a lot of difference* (I3). It gives the impression that volunteering is understood differently by the organizations, but the main activity which is under the term is applicable for all NGOs. In other terms, the concept is equivalent to volunteer tourism when volunteers are taking their time off to do voluntary work. The representative of Nordic NGO expressed why they do not use the real term:

*we try to avoid volunteering term as a such, we use still internally to preparation project, but for external branding, we tend to say internship abroad or work abroad for professional once.* (I3)

Eventually, Nordic NGOs position themselves in different ways. Some perceive volunteering as their main activity, while others modify it depending on situations. Moreover, the reason why they are calling it like that, was explained in a way that volunteering is not only altruism but also an experience, which is clarified in details:

*I think it's a little bit misunderstood in Finland as a such. Volunteering, in general perception, I think it's exactly that you just do like food sharing or some like physical exercise to, in order to help, not many people see volunteering as getting experience.* (I3)

In fact, the experience raises many associations, either it is voluntary work experience, traveling experience, a cultural experience or all involved in one extensive volunteer tourism experience. Nonetheless, several NGOs are aware of using the word “help” which was much criticized by academics. As an alternative, representatives use such synonyms as *to assist* (I4), *to contribute* or *to engage* (I5). Others are trying to be conscious of using the word “help”. They claim that the word itself is not describing the action of what volunteers are doing in the projects because usually, it is a learning process for both parts involved. Likewise, respondents who had more business terminology also used such phrases as *margin markets*, *so Africa*, *Latin America* (I3) – to describe the popular destinations; or *it's maximum customer orientated* (I7) - while talking about their services. Apparently, the language and terms they are using show that Nordic NGOs are trying to position themselves differently than commercial

organizations, but at the same time, they are involved in the market of volunteer tourism. As a matter of fact, Nordic NGOs representatives' language reveals that they use terms which are more related to the real purposes of volunteering.

Mainly, decommodification of volunteer tourism is suggested to be an as ideal structure for non-profit organizations, which delivers non-commercial volunteer tourism projects (Wearing & Ponting, 2009). Indeed, researched Nordic NGOs demonstrated their anxiety about tourism and assured that they do not tend to make a profit out of the international volunteering. Tourism is perceived as negative force commodifying volunteering, help, and good intentions of non-profit organizations. Nordic NGOs tend to appreciate altruistic motives of the volunteers and carry the philanthropic aims like to assist communities, to provide peace in the World or promote intercultural learning. On the whole, Nordic NGOs understand volunteer tourism as a commercialized sector, which is neither their practices nor they would like to see it. Expressed statements show that NGOs do not relate their activities within volunteer tourism. Apparently, they do want to distance themselves from something immoral brought by tourism (Butcher, 2003).

## **4.2 NGOs practices in decommodifying volunteer tourism**

The following part elaborates on the discussion of how Nordic NGOs practices are perceived as efforts to decommodify volunteer tourism. Findings show that decommodification in volunteer tourism is developed in three stages: volunteers' selection process, sending process, and task assignment. Some organizations place considerable importance on monitoring their volunteers from the very beginning. Initially, discussion elaborates the recruitment process of volunteers and the importance given to specific requirement. Secondly, it is essential to highlight the process of pre-training or training on-site, and finally how volunteers are assigned to their tasks on the projects.

### **4.2.1 Selection process of volunteers**

A primary concern is that three out of seven researched organizations that are working on-site and those which have excellent communication within project host-organizations acquire a

particular set of skills that participants need to possess before they are accepted to participate in the project. The skills were described as follow:

*they have to be sports teachers or equivalent sports instructors, graduated from the sports institutes. (I4)*

*volunteers they all need to have some educational background; so teacher training or other pedagogical training, so they are experts when they go abroad and volunteering. (I6)*

Additionally, other organizations value those volunteers who have the international experience of living in another country. Further, some organizations require to have university degree or experience in specific training: *some teacher training experience beforehand (I6)*, also sometimes another language than English: *if a project is in German, and you don't speak German you will not be selected (I7)*, or other certain skills that needed only for particular projects like IT skills or *if volunteer projects is regarding marketing and they want somebody who can design some specific brochures then they check that knowledge (I7)*. In fact, organizations are ensuring that volunteers will be able to do particular tasks. Having volunteers with appropriate knowledge or competencies organizations guarantee the sustainability of the projects which brings productive output, especially within education. Likewise, respondents described that skilled volunteers would have knowledge of the different cultures too, so they are prepared to meet and live outside their comfort zone.

Hence, just a few organizations mention that they are trying to evaluate not only the abilities of volunteers but also the motivation which suits the programs' aims. Organizations which are working on-site or organizations which have excellent communication with the receiving party, are more concern about the possible outcomes of volunteering. Those organizations that are operating on-site can quickly evaluate, what kind of skills are needed to volunteer in the projects. Moreover, such organizations at first place care about the community needs and according to the projects, select only those volunteers who can contribute to the projects appropriately (see Hensel, 2012). By the same token, few organizations are sending volunteers only when there is a need to assist in the projects: *we select on the quality of education and how do we see that they can operate (I4)*. Having few volunteers in the organization gives the perception that organization is not aiming to promote voluntary work as "experience for everybody", instead they are trying to minimize the negative impacts brought, mainly, by the

western volunteer tourists. In this case, the organization provides voluntary placements when there is a need to have a support (see Raymond, 2012).

#### **4.2.2 Training programs for volunteers**

Another important practice considered by Nordic NGOs is training sessions before departure, where they prepare volunteers to meet cultural differences and easier integrate them into the projects. The particular attention paid for pre-departure training minimize negative cultural and social impacts between the volunteers and the locals (Hensel, 2012). Furthermore, NGOs revealed that it is essential to familiarize volunteer with a future position in the projects and what task s/he will be handling. Worth to mention, that all Nordic NGOs are organizing pre-departure training, workshops or preparation seminars, but not all of them have the same structure. While some organize the seminars that last only a few hours, others arrange training sessions that last up to 3 days. Few organizations are just providing general information about visa, health insurance, transportation, safety, or weather conditions in the project country. And other lecture about the intercultural adaptation process, cultural shock, colonialism, whiteness, history of volunteering, norm criticism and issues related to community development. Interestingly, one Nordic NGO has special topics during the preparation workshops, where they are opening such issues as colonialism, or introducing cultural shock. Representative expressed:

*we don't want to reproduce like colonialism /.../ that a volunteer shouldn't go to another country like to "save the world". So many volunteers, and the concept of volunteering has many times been that a volunteering should go down to Africa and save African children or like educate them about HIV and Aids /.../ we want to /.../ break that stereotype of a volunteer because we think that /.../ volunteer is not going to like "save the world" in any kind or make a very big difference. (I5)*

Nordic NGOs are helping to construct "ethical-self" of the volunteer who is going to encounter another culture, people, and space (Caton, 2014). Respondents believe that their training is a good way to develop a clear perspective of volunteer tourism. Besides, interviewee presumes that it all depends on the volunteer because organization acts only as an agent between both sides. Here, Keese (2011, p. 258) also points out that NGOs or other volunteer tourism organizations usually act as a "bridge" between the volunteers and the communities in need. Equally, important to mention that NGOs also warn volunteers about possible culture shock, in order to avoid complaint about the projects. Hence, the representative explicates:



*...however things in other countries are really really different, which can lead to the fact that they do experience culture shock and because of that there is a connection with dissatisfaction with the programs /.../ We introduce them even to Hofstede globe model of our culture. (I7)*

Nevertheless, some organizations have mentioned that training is an essential part of pre-departure, as well they suggest that preparation before volunteering is highly compulsory for all the volunteers. It is important to have a basic understanding about volunteering before doing so, because, usually, volunteers without any pieces of training lack elementary knowledge. As one representative mentions: *when they send students here, they have absolutely no orientation in the school (I1)*. Naturally, this receiving organization feels that people have no knowledge or previous experience in teaching. So, to benefit from the volunteer's organization is trying to establish on-site training. Thus, the representative points out:

*we try to make kind of structure how to train volunteers /.../ but you have to also knowledge that people are coming for one month to three months' time, so even with very good structure training or something what you don't probably gain is the continuity for somebody's program. Because you never know if you get another person who can continue the work of the person who has been here, so so it, volunteers or internship participation can never be the same as permanent work. (I1)*

This idea of pre-trainings provides the positive opinion about the organization. First, because it is important for them to get concrete results of the project and secondly, organizations do care about their recruited volunteers. Therefore, volunteers are continuously changing, albeit the organization still carries the responsibility to teach every volunteer in order to get satisfying results. It is noticeable that, organization endeavors to reach sustainable outcomes which possibly come from inexperienced volunteers. On the other hand, the ambiguity of volunteer tourism is illustrated in respondent's opinion, where is clearly stated that volunteer will never replace the job, which could be done by professionals (Guttenberg, 2009). The instability and continually change of people, which not have the same knowledge were the main obstacles encountered in Nordic NGOs programs. Based on the fact that sustainability is essential in volunteer tourism, it is suggested by Kearney (2001) and Hensel (2012) to implement long-term volunteering, which is also promoted by Nordic NGOs:

*Because we think that long-term effect is more sustainable for a project in another country to have a volunteer for a long time. Especially, when you are working with the young people or children. (I5)*

Accordingly, Nordic NGOs are acquainted with the current criticism of volunteer tourism, and they are trying to change the understanding of the concept by educating the volunteers. This practice is seen as an attempt to decommodify volunteer tourism because volunteers are shifting their perception on volunteer tourism. One representative mentioned that volunteers *don't have too much press and stress about what to do like "I have to contribute, I have to change the world" kind of, that they should have an interesting time and listen to people and learn* (I5). At this point, Nordic NGO does not advertise volunteer tourism as an opportunity "to save the World" rather they are educating volunteers about the possible negative attitudes towards it, they *prepare the volunteers to make volunteers reflect upon themselves so they go with the right intentions* (I5). The training provides a rich ground for understanding the cross-cultural exchange between hosts and guests (see Wearing & Grabowski, 2011). It seems like NGOs are minimizing the power between the locals and the volunteers which are brought by different cultural understandings (see Wearing & Ponting, 2009). In this light, another representative gives the particular attention on how volunteers distinguish themselves on the project:

*We always inform them [volunteers] that try to not be the boss, I mean, you are trying to assist the locals as much as possible not become the boss for the project /.../ so that they are part and parcel of the development program and they are small small piece of it. At least, I hope so.* (I4)

Nordic NGOs are trying to provide a clear view of the situation on the project destination. Here, they are addressing the moral dilemma of volunteer tourism which has different light in creating the cultural respect and minimizing the stereotypes (Jones, 2005). Interviewees highlighted more truthful aspects of volunteering and their small role in assisting to the locals.

#### **4.2.3 Task assignment in the projects**

The third vital stage where Nordic NGOs are decommodifying volunteer tourism is the task assignment for the volunteers. Nordic NGOs are likely to divide their volunteers according to the expertise which volunteers have. For example, one organization has three types of volunteers: *volunteer travelers, interns, and professionals* (I1), so the tasks are given accordingly:

*for those volunteers who are not professional, who are more like travelers, the first group, they commonly attend duties like social media; they give visibility for the public /.../ So those who are professional volunteers we place to programs like UNICEF, central governments, so they can take parts.* (I1)

The classification of volunteers shows that organizations are trying to match volunteers' skills with particular tasks on the project. Evidently, certain tasks are assigned just for those who meet criteria and the description of the work. In this way, organization achieves higher goals concerning the community development projects (Raymond and Hall, 2008a; Hensel, 2012). Moreover, the positive impact could be seen on the volunteer side as well. Self-gratification is reached when s/he is having tangible outcomes of the voluntary project. Hosting organizations are taking the biggest responsibility in order to transfer volunteers' knowledge into achievable outcomes. Nonetheless, few organizations have mentioned that their given tasks for volunteers do not include, for example, real teaching but some assistance in the schools. Such organizations are claiming to provide intercultural learning for both – volunteers and local children.

Concerning the importance of task assignment, there is an organization which is creating specific definitions about the volunteers and their role. In particular, the organization sets the guidelines for each type of volunteers. This on-site volunteering organization is more concerned about the negative impacts brought by the volunteers and improving their practices by creating the guidelines that help volunteers to define themselves. The respondent describes thus:

*that's why for example us, we are part of this Erasmus program, [we] make a guidelines; what is volunteering what is not. In our organization, we called this volunteer travelers more like cultural tourists and we place them in duties that are not straight (...) taking any larger responsibility of any community or development work. (I1)*

The above-demonstrated approach shows that organization is trying to increase their productivity and ensures that tasks will be accomplished respecting the abilities of the volunteer. In this way youth can see what kind of task division organization have on-site, so the volunteer will know in advance about the possible impact.

However, NGOs are not only concerning how to adjust volunteers with particular tasks but also, how to accommodate them on the destination. Specific attention is paid to the moral dilemma of volunteer tourism leads to the de commodification which stands upon ethical engagement with local cultures (Wearing et al., 2005). Thus, Nordic NGOs significantly consider how to educate the behavior of the volunteer that s/he act responsibly towards locals. Regularly Nordic NGOs are allocating volunteers to live with local families. Hence,

organizations are eager to strengthen the intercultural learning by placing volunteers to live in houses of local families. Some interviewees emphasized that:

*volunteers they are living in the local families, so they get a lot of local culture through the family living, and on the other hand, also the local families they get quite a good bunch of Finnish culture's, also for them. (I4)*

*Volunteers they live in the host family, so the contribution to the host family is like also, to make contacts with the world and to you know, increase networks between people, they became as like family member, that it's also very important. (I5)*

Notably, Nordic NGOs are trying to strengthen social interaction between both guests and hosts (Butcher, 2007). In this respect, NGOs are working to provide local accommodation services instead of placing volunteers in the hotels or other commercial places which would increase commodification. Representatives from Nordic NGOs believe that their practices are better than commercial companies' since they do not charge enormous amount of money for the volunteering trips. By contrast, volunteers who are going through their organizations they spend money locally: *they [volunteers] are paying for the safaris, for the travels, for the tickets themselves, they are paying the house accommodation what they have they are paying it directly to the families (I4)*. In this case, Nordic NGOs practice is decommodifying volunteer tourism because their volunteers' are supporting local enterprises and enhancing the power of being more independent (Gray & Campbell, 2007). The study shows that most of the time NGOs are placing volunteers to live with host families, so they are paying money straight to the locals. In this case, volunteers are contributing in empowering the communities' economy. One respondent recounted that volunteer tourism brings economic benefits to the communities: *volunteer tourist maybe [are] much better than normal beach and safari tourist, where all the money and income stays overseas. Volunteer tourist at least they bring money for those countries that [are] developing countries. (I1)*

Remarkably, such practices as sending skilled volunteers, or having specialized training about local culture, and trying to empower local economy by providing accommodation in local families are those Nordic NGOs practices in decommodifying volunteer tourism. Current thinking of decommodification is clearly seen in the practices of Nordic NGOs, which offer more responsible ways of volunteering. Also, NGOs illustrates themselves as those which are less concerned about the need for profit while are more in line with the needs of the local communities. In examining the practices of Nordic NGOs research demonstrates that decommodification exists as an initiative which could be highly involved in the organizational

practices. Attempts to decommodify volunteer tourism could minimize the negative impacts brought by commercial, commodified market forces and encompass well-being of host communities, offer opportunities for moral consumption and promote a more altruistic desire to volunteering (Wearing & McGehee, 2013).

### **4.3 NGOs obstacles in decommodifying volunteer tourism**

The market of volunteer tourism has strong forces towards commodification. For this reason, the following part develops the discussion about the difficulties that Nordic NGOs are encountering in decommodifying volunteer tourism.

#### **4.3.1 NGOs boundedness to contemporary market**

Conflicting views are evident when some Nordic NGOs disclosed that they are receiving two types of volunteers: *in our organization, we called [these] volunteer travelers more like cultural tourists and we place them in duties that are not straight /.../ taking any larger responsibility of any community or development work.* (I1). This particular hosting organization has volunteers who are, apparently, buying volunteering experience, while others are funded by EU. Although, the interviewee revealed that they cannot require from inexperienced volunteers to do difficult tasks: *you can't demand for person to perform something that [volunteer] is not able to, so then it has to be something easier and more like experience for the future of your life* (I1). Some organizations are bound to the market system, and especially those, which are operating on-site. They need to accept the volunteers even they do not have skills; instead, they have money. Consequently, NGOs are playing into the market which stands upon the capitalism. It is noted by academics, that sending organizations “should develop programs which will be of genuine value to the local communities” and approach projects as “learning process” rather than as “experience” (Raymond & Hall, 2008a). In this particular case, the organization provides an experience instead of intercultural learning.

Still, organizations are adopting to the consumer demand which is coming from the participants, who wish to get volunteer tourism experience. In other words, organizations promote volunteering as an opportunity of self-development. Analysis of Nordic NGOs selection process and their requirements for the voluntary projects show that not all

organizations are highlighting skills as one of the primary necessity. In principal, researched organizations emphasized, that skills which they require from the participant vary depending on the receiving organization. The competencies of the volunteers and what kind of professional skills are needed for contribution in the project are not that well considered. As one of the representatives from NGOs noted: *no, no skills /.../ like 95% of the projects they don't require any skills* (I5). Moreover, only English knowledge are the leading indicator while choosing to volunteer in another country: *we do have our requirements /.../ with English skills, I mean you need to communicate somehow* (I3). Generally speaking, it means that volunteering opportunities which do not require particular expertise are open to everyone who wish to go to volunteer abroad. Subsequently, there is no special selection of the skills which volunteers need to possess.

By letting unqualified people go to the Third World countries, organizations are risking to increase mass tourism and colonization (Palacios, 2010; Vrasti, 2013). Similarly, the question about the unskilled volunteers was also highlighted in social media by Birrell (2010) who raised the questions: *But what would we say if unchecked foreigners went into our children's homes to cuddle and care for the kids? We would be shocked, so why standards be lowered in the developing world?* The question explains that there is a lack of understanding about volunteer tourism and its development projects. By lowering requirements for volunteers' organizations forgot to measure the negative impacts brought into communities. As such, organizations are selfishly directed towards their customer demand. Indeed, the volunteering experience becomes the one commodifying good intentions of altruism to satisfy the interest of volunteer travelers.

As a matter of fact, volunteers they wish to help in communities, but at the end, they are not qualified enough to achieve real goals, as they are placed only to see how community development organizations are operating. It means that NGOs are not demanding from volunteer travelers who are paying for their volunteering experience sufficient amount of money because their *operations finance are depended on number of travelers* (I1). In this way, money has an absolute power to experience volunteer tourism, but not much contribute to the projects. This boundedness to the contemporary market shows that organization depends on those travelers who rather consume than can assist (see Smith, 2014). Nevertheless, this particular organization becomes the one which is reconstructing the destination, or as in this

case the project, in order to cater the “volunteer travelers” needs (Teo & Leong, 2006). NGO is taking advantage of current demand and adapting to the current situation, which comes from a consumer who is paying to “help”.

Most of the time organizations are funded by donors, either it is state institutions, corporate sector, individuals or other commissions. For instance, the organization which is operating in one Africa's country have different constraints such as community development, services for volunteers, and working as third part safari operators. The representative defines their activities as follow:

*we have safari guides, we have drivers, and we also run a safari company separately, so the safari company is running that hard twice and-and-and license and registration license and then the profits of those operations are then sent to community operations we run. So, of course, the question in NGO like us we having 50 plus staff and premises and this and that. First thing we want to secure to that our running costs and then on top of that we support to construct schools. (I1)*

In this particular case, the organization is also running and benefiting from the tourism activities, which brings money that stays locally in the country. Besides that, the organization have business related purposes: *you have to earn money yourself, you have to be like a business otherwise you are nothing (I1)*. On the positive side, it is an excellent tool to collect funding and run projects which are useful for communities. On the downside, representative clearly emphasized that they sustain business first and then share the rest with locals, for example, by building the schools. NGOs are the main players in the aid industry, and especially those who are operating as community development organizations (Shivji, 2007). NGOs they cannot escape the market circuits and economic forces because they are not only concentrating on the projects, but they are also looking for the ways to sustain the projects and their needs.

Furthermore, it derived from the interview that few Nordic NGOs are charging money for their services, as representatives describe along the lines:

*very low but it's exactly the concept that the money that we get, the revenue that we get, we just invest in our people. We don't get the profit as a such we are non-profit, but we need to sustain in order to run as organization, in order to fill our purpose. (I3)*

*we have to take a fee, in order to to make possible the volunteer exchange but it's, normally, a lesser, smaller fee than the companies volunteering companies. (I5)*

Even though NGOs explain that fee is not for the purpose of getting revenue, still the process reveals commodity because services are offered in the marketplace for the exchange of money (Appadurai, 1988). In this particular situation, youth are paying the participation fee, and organizations are obligated to find the suitable volunteering placement. One interviewee explained:

*I mean you only have to pay after you get accepted to another opportunity, so in this way we guarantee you delivery and you won't you don't need to be afraid for your money because you don't pay until you go abroad and that's it. (I7)*

However, the participation fee confirms that volunteers are buying an experience from sending organizations. Also, it opens the discussion of ethical egoism, since organizations take advantage of their needs fulfillment, and their organizational management while community needs are left apart (Fennel, 2006).

#### **4.3.2 Ethical constraints and consumer orientation**

From the ethical point of view, egoism is seen when organizations are concentrating only on the volunteers and their self-development. Organizations promote altruism which might not be directed to the real help for communities, but for the care of volunteer's development. Regarding training, some organizations are taking it very seriously, while other organizations are concentrating more on the volunteer and how s/he will perceive the project and grow personally. Organizations are helping to *set [the] expectations, set the goals that they want to achieve through the exchange program, and this is actually the part of our leadership development model* (I3). Eventually, the NGOs which are concentrating on volunteer development they try to emphasize the importance of the experience and skills, which volunteers are getting from the projects.

Nordic NGOs are recounting volunteering experience as an opportunity to reinforce their resumes with qualities for the creation of “self-as-enterprise” (see Koleh, 2014). Clearly, NGOs are not paying attention to the tasks that they will be doing or on the cultural engagement with locals. In this manner, altruism is changing from the idea to help in vulnerable situations to the idea of non-formal education and competence building. The “help” which is highlighted by volunteer tourism organizations falls into two camps: help for communities in need and help to build self for the volunteers. Some Nordic NGOs clearly



showed that their focus is on the volunteer and the development of leadership skills or intercultural learning. Few organizations expressed themselves as following:

*since our impact is indirect we eager to developing people. Our main contribution is that we make the people more developed. So, we don't measure directly, for example, what problems they have solved locally in the destination but we measure, how the person was developed, how much they develop themselves. And in a little bit bigger picture how, for example, its impacts Finland that person learn something and they can use the skills they still can apply them either on the work placement afterwards or in their personal life, so this is impact on the people /.../ So, this is actually, the tool how it can be stood out for your future employments. (I3)*

*we try to develop leadership in our members and provide same leadership experience to people that go abroad /.../ it's also about the personal development how people grow. (I7)*

This discourse demonstrates that organizations are interested only in youth development of skills, which later used in enhancing their CVs. At this point, Nordic NGOs are acting as representatives of the neoliberal economy, where they stress the importance of self-development, which is necessary for their successful future career. Organizations also use the language of “develop people”, “work placement afterwards”, “stood out”, “future employments”, which give the chance to believe that volunteers are “investing” their time and money in building the “competitive self” (Simpson, 2005, p. 451). Smith (2014, p. 36) also stress that the demand to have international work experience is seen as a “neoliberal agenda” which is formed by the global businesses as a “rite of passage”.

Nonetheless, so-called leadership development experiences or internships that people are doing in faraway countries are not incorporated in formal education, and only a few universities in Scandinavia consider it and accept as the study program. The interviewee describes thus:

*some of the exchange participants are able to negotiate that they get credits. However, it's not something that I can confirm you to right now, but I believe that it all depends on program, so our exchange participants will need to check with the program administrators. (I7)*

Along the lines, organizations are supporting neoliberalism where volunteers are immersed in self-creation through volunteering projects (Vrasti, 2013). Here, neoliberalism promises an opportunity to develop self, desire to do good, as well as, live and learn about the developing country. Organizations support the idea that skills gained during the international volunteering are as an advantage in the future job market. Previously, the same organizations were pointing out that they do not require volunteers to possess particular skills for the work. Naturally,

volunteering brings the chance to reinforce curriculum even with soft skills which were obtained during the volunteering.

More than that, it was illustrated that organizations are aiming to promote the international volunteering for masses: *with volunteering, we want to provide this experiences as many people as possible* (I3). Additionally, numbers were also grasped in the projects assortment:

*three hundred thousand opportunities all around the world.* (I3)

*as we only send volunteers to the project, we never had the, we never had any contact with the actual project that the volunteer goes to because there are thousands of projects in our networks and we cannot really keep track with all of them.* (I5)

The expressed view resembles mass tourism because these organizations are orientated more in the amount of the volunteers or offered projects. In this vein, organizations are positioned in the marketplace, because they are providing their services to the consumer. More than that, the massified volunteer tourism is also a current discussion in social media. This importance was highlighted by McGray (2004) who questions: *Can we send fifteen thousand volunteers?* The ignorance of what is going in the communities where volunteers are sent, highlights the substantial problem which is raised of miscommunication. Often this obstacle makes impossible to adopt decommodified volunteer tourism approach. Those organizations which are only sending the volunteers lack the communication with partner organizations about the outcomes of the projects, and how their assigned volunteers perform particular tasks. Here, the utilitarianism is pointed out by the representative, who stress that they cannot follow up within each project, they do not consider the consequences of sending the volunteers in developing countries. As well as, utilitarian approach suggests that consequences of what will happen as a result of doing so, are not measured by some NGOs (see Rachels, 2015). They are competing in the market in order to provide this experience for more people.

Additionally, the idea that volunteer tourism is related to mass tourism is also seen in the organization's future plans. Even though volunteer tourism is much criticized in the social media, some organizations, therefore, are expecting to develop and grow, meaning to send even more volunteers in undeveloped countries:

*[we] more understand that this organization needs to be more accessible so right now we took away this criterion, so right now if you 18 years old, in the future actually it will be 16, but right now is 18, you could go abroad doing the volunteering programs even if you are not involved in the studies, vocational study, or a gap year whatsoever /.../*

*and as a strategy we have [that] first of all, we need to be accessible to everybody everywhere which means more virtual outrage more inclusiveness. (I3)*

Organizations are not considering neither they are familiar with negative impacts brought by the volunteer tourism. According to the respondent, they will continue to send even younger and unskilled volunteers. This discourse conflicts with McGehee and Andereck (2009) suggested idea that organizations should consider to reduce quantity of volunteers and enhance the number of experienced professionals. It leads to a discussion that this particular NGO is concentrating on masses. They are planning to send more volunteer tourists and to make the projects more accessible even for younger people.

From the utilitarian point of view, organizations are eager to provide volunteer tourism to the greatest number of individuals. In this particular case, the experience is seen as pleasure provided by the NGOs (see Jamal & Menzel, 2009). To such a degree, another ethical issue is egoism, which discloses that organizations are orientated on the development of consumers (as self), and they do not concentrate on the communities. It clearly shows that some NGOs do not know what is going on-site and how volunteers are contributing to the projects. Organizations are interested in the self-development of the volunteers. However, they do not count that volunteers are developing themselves while doing charitable work which sometimes does more harm than good. In fact, NGOs are selfishly focusing on the personal development of their customer (volunteer), above that, they are opening the ways for youth to exploit locals for own personal gains (see Guttentag, 2012).

As illustrated above, some Nordic NGOs are bounded to the neoliberal market system. Where their main focus is on the volunteers' interest rather than communities. Thus, organizations depend on the growing demand for non-professional volunteers and have to adapt to the current situation. However, the neoliberal market forces create the rules to promote volunteer tourism as an experience which enhances skills needed building the future career. More importantly, this study found that sending organizations could be seen as central players in adopting to decommodified structures of volunteer tourism.

First, it was noted, that volunteers sending organizations do not have strong communication with receiving organizations (in the words of one representative *we never had any contact with the actual project that the volunteer goes to (I5)*), so basically, they are not that familiar with

the projects where they send volunteers, its outcomes, and benefits. And secondly, they do not have high requirements for the volunteers to participate in the projects and most of the time they send unskilled young people. These findings are also similar to Hensel (2012), Wearing and Grabowski (2011) who found that organizations are lacking guidelines for the decommodified approach to volunteer tourism. For these reasons decommodification as an ethical initiative should be particularly considered by all NGOs. Sending organizations should have main responsibility in recruiting only skilled volunteers, educating them by ethically engage with local cultures and environment, offering projects as a learning process and not as an experience. The decommodifying practices disclosed to be implemented more in hosting NGOs agendas rather than sending.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Decommodified volunteer tourism has its potential to reconsider the real meaning of volunteering where volunteers are ethically engaging with local communities and nature, respecting the others and self as volunteers, also benefiting the local economy. The study at hand is carried out by applying the theoretical approach of commodification and decommodification in volunteer tourism within an ethical concern. The literature portrayed that NGOs are as new missionaries which are seeking to reduce negative impacts caused by commercialized volunteer tourism (Wearing, 2001). The research indicates how Nordic NGOs decommodify volunteer tourism through their everyday practices.

Initially, Nordic volunteering NGOs range from commercial volunteer tourism enterprises by their ideological aims, specific objectives, and attentive use of language. It has been discovered that tourism brought negative understanding in the context of international volunteering. Nordic NGOs prefer to have a distance from volunteer tourism, even though the concept itself involves both parties: non-profit and for-profit organizations. First, Nordic NGOs identify that their practices differ from profit-enterprises because they are not aiming for money. And secondly, they are not playing with volunteer's moral feelings to advertise their projects as commercial organizations tend to do. Further, Nordic NGOs claim to provide an experience, where volunteers are committed doing particular tasks which are closely related to the social concerns in developing countries. With an emphasis on the power of language, Nordic volunteering NGOs are not manipulating with word "help", instead they are applying realistic terms as to assist, to contribute or to engage. Particularly, Nordic NGOs position outside the volunteer tourism market, and disclose that tourism becomes the only contradiction which commodifies volunteering and aid work in the context of international volunteering.

More importantly, Nordic NGOs decommodifying practices were perceived not only in the language of the respondents but also in their volunteer monitoring practices. Specifically, these practices of Nordic NGOs were closely encountered in three stages of recruitment, training programs and placement of the volunteers. By some Nordic NGOs, the recruitment process is perceived as one of the most important because here they are choosing volunteers with a particular set of skills who would be able to carry out the tasks accordingly. Few NGOs are ensuring that they require only qualified volunteers to assist in the projects. Nonetheless, the

interest to acknowledge volunteers within the country, traditions, culture, current issues of colonialism, culture shock appeared to be as highly considered practice. It also revealed that Nordic NGOs are trying to reduce the stereotypes about volunteer tourism by giving practical information of how volunteers need to act on the project, how they should perceive and respect local communities and their needs.

Significantly, sustainability in volunteering projects was also considered into the practices of Nordic NGOs. Some of the organizations are requiring only qualified volunteers, stress the importance of training or implementing long-term volunteering. In this manner, Nordic NGOs are helping volunteers to engage ethically in local communities, and strengthen their social interaction. Likewise, Nordic NGOs are assigning volunteers for the specific tasks according to their knowledge and competencies. As it has been identified, decommodifying practices were, mostly, visible in those Nordic NGOs which are operating on-site. Specifically, only those organizations are more immersed in the real situation of developing countries, and are acquainted with current needs of the local communities. Although, sending organizations have a tendency to highlight the importance of pre-departure training, where they share the knowledge and respect to customs, history, or culture in order to encourage volunteers to make a positive impact.

Moreover, Nordic volunteering NGOs everyday practices exist on both commodification and decommodification of volunteer tourism. As shown below, decommodification is perceived in the practices where NGOs consider sending trained volunteers, assign volunteers to the particular tasks, in addition educate them about ethical consumption. On the contrary, few organizations still appear to commodify volunteer tourism. First, due to the boundedness to the markets forces. Nordic NGOs are obliged to operate as a business minded system because their projects and third party activities are directly involving the exchange of money for services. More than that, few organizations appeared to charge volunteers for their services. Nordic NGOs are incorporated to play the rules of the contemporary market system, where the demand derives from young volunteers who do not possess particular skills, but they do have financial power. Furthermore, ethical egoism enhanced the concern that Nordic NGOs are first fulfilling their requirements and duties while intentions to the community development are left apart as a secondary plan. In principle, such ethical constraints as egoism and utilitarianism are seen as dominative forces to commodify volunteer tourism. Nordic

NGOs which are working only as sending organizations, mostly, concentrate on the development of the volunteers. Organizations are working in a neoliberal market system where advertised international volunteering gives the opportunity to enhance soft skills, to get experience which, particularly, will be useful for the future career. Some Nordic volunteering NGOs are focusing on self-creation of the volunteer where host communities become like a field to implement this non-formal education. Besides that, Nordic NGOs are increasing the mass tourism by minimizing the requirements for volunteers. They do expect that this experience in the future will be accessible for everyone. The utilitarianism opens ethical concern that organizations are sending volunteers to developing countries without thinking about actual outcomes. They are interested in providing volunteer experience for the greatest amount of people and do not consider the consequences of their action.

On the whole, researched Nordic NGOs neither commodify volunteer tourism nor decommodify. Nordic volunteering NGOs are immersed in playing the rules of the contemporary market. Practices in decommodifying volunteer tourism stay under the assumption that it is possible to implement more ethical concerns into their everyday practices. Even though, NGOs cannot avoid the forces of capitalism, neoliberalism, colonialism, however, they have a chance to consider more responsibly about the interests of everyone involved in volunteer tourism. In order to decommodify volunteer tourism, the profound structural changes are needed, like to concentrate on immediate help and build local structures, to focus more on community needs and not on the volunteer. Decommodification of volunteer tourism is possible, first when there is a need to have volunteers in the communities, second, volunteers need to have an expertise for the tasks and ethically engage with locals.

It could be argued that Nordic NGOs by separating themselves from tourism are trying to change the concept of volunteering. In doing so, providing more community-centered decommodified volunteer tourism structure. They are seen as those practitioners who are implementing different practices in order to highlight communities' needs. Nonetheless, decommodification as a concept brought to reduce negative impacts on volunteer tourism could be adopted by many volunteering organizations. Decommodified approach to volunteer tourism is applicable for every volunteer tourism practitioner or even the volunteer. This study has contributed providing decommodified volunteer tourism approach which could serve the original purposes of volunteering.

Thus, findings indicate only practices of Nordic NGOs, in this regard, it should be carefully considered applying the results to all volunteering NGOs, while they range from the country, culture, and organizational structure. Nevertheless, the research showed that those organizations which are working on-site or have good communication with host organizations are seen as decommodifying volunteer tourism. The decommodified approach to volunteer tourism has its potential to save the original meaning of volunteer tourism. More ethical, more responsible, more sustainable, and more decommodified volunteer tourism is needed to reduce the stereotypes of developing countries by “saving the world”, “helping the poor” and “making the difference”. Organizations should have a more realistic picture of what is going in the developing countries, when there is a demand to send volunteers there, and what do they achieve. While volunteering is associated with altruism and doing good to others, personal self-development of young people in developing countries might be re-evaluated. There are numerous ways of personal development by volunteering locally, and not consuming developing world as a field of non-formal education.

The concept of decommodification in volunteer tourism is little studied by academics, which serve the reasons for limitation of the research. Some limitations, however, are recognized within this study. First, the time and abilities to interview each NGO in the Nordic countries limit the sample of the research. Findings indicate only the practices of seven Nordic NGOs; different results would be achieved with more interviews from diverse NGOs. Besides that, the interviews of this study were carried out in the English language, which was not the mother tongue for all parts involved, neither for the interviewees nor the interviewer. Such linguistic limitation should be taken into account concerning the richness of empirical material. Notably, the interviewing via Skype program limited to analyze the non-verbal language or facial expressions, since not every interviewee preferred to use a video camera during the interview. Besides the time limit, abilities, sample and linguistic limits, the chosen theoretical framework, methodology and empirical data created the validity and reliability in answering the main research question.

Still, the profound research on all players involved in volunteer tourism would be relevant in future studies. Sending organizations, international support institutions, and other channels which play a significant role in facilitating the volunteers would be as a suggestion for the future studies. There is a need to enhance the understanding of how decommodified structure



of volunteer tourism fits under the for-profit organizations business model. In the future's qualitative research, the topic could be analyzed with different methods, for example, participant observation would enhance the research with a closer look to the everyday situations in the local communities. Participation observation could enable to take part in NGOs activities on-site, also to observe the interaction between locals and volunteers. This method would enrich the study with full descriptions of how organizations are implementing decommodified structure, who are involved in it, how volunteers and locals adapt to the new approach, and what happens. Similarly, using participatory observation method would be interesting to research about sending organizations, what are their perceptions on decommodified volunteer tourism, and how it could be fully implemented in their practices. Also, it would be worth studying about the volunteers and their interaction within organizations: how they perceive decommodified approach to volunteer tourism; how volunteers are engaging in projects, their interaction with locals; and how they possess particular tasks according to their knowledge. As additional method studies could use qualitative interviews to find deeper understanding from different people who are involved in the organization's operations.

As this study indicates, decommodified approach to volunteer tourism exists and occurs on the spectrum of simultaneous practices. In general, study suggests that decommodification is already as an actual initiative taken in some practices by Nordic NGOs. Still, future studies need to focus on positive and negative effects of this structure, and most importantly to measure the impact on decommodified volunteer tourism.

*Leaving my first love Ken in America for my second (but greater) love, my soul country of Africa, was no easy choice. I broke Ken's heart the day I left, and I carried this picture across the ocean dreaming of the day we may meet again. Well my friends, the day has come. Ken is coming to visit me and, more importantly, help save Africa – together!*

*#togetherisbetter #ittakestwo #keninkenya #sorryAfriKen  
#iguessforeverreallyisntthatlong #turnsoutitsjustafewweeks #africacrush  
#trueloveknowsnoborders #onlyfundraisingforplanetickets #inthejungle  
#themightyjungle #canyoufellthelovetonight #icanhearyoucallingtome  
#acrosstheocean #whetheryoubelieveyouKenoryoucant #youreprobablyright  
#leaveroomforjesus #ornot #thechoiceisyours (BarbieSaviour, 2016)*

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